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renza della nerezza aborigena, significante la non-umanità (eliminabile) degli indigeni australiani, la nerezza costruita durante la schiavitù legittimava lo sfruttamento (imprescindibile) degli schiavi e allo stesso tempo stabiliva una non-umanità "indispensabile" (il non-detto della Carta costituzionale degli Stati Uniti d'America) alla fondazione sia dell'umanità esclusiva del colono-cittadino americano sia dell'egemonia culturale bianca.

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Settler Colonialism Then and Now

A conversation between J. Kēhaulani Kauanui and Patrick Wolfe[1]

Abstract

This conversation originated in a radio interview of Patrick Wolfe conducted by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui on her public affairs show, «Indigenous Politics: From Native New England and Beyond» from July 13, 2010. The article is an expanded version of that interview, updated to reflect our ongoing dialogue. Kauanui invites Wolfe to lay out the central features of his approach to settler colonialism, which he views as a project of eliminating and replacing Native societies on their land. Mindful of the approach's implications for both activism and scholarship, Kauanui guides the conversation through such key issues as: Settler colonialism's cultural logic of elimination – how is it defined and what are its various modalities (ethnic cleansing, spatial confinement, blood quantum, etc)? Who is a settler – are enslaved and/or indentured people settlers? What is the difference between colonies with settlers (Algeria, South Africa, etc) and settler colonies (Australia, Hawai'i, Palestine, the USA, etc)? What uses does this approach have for the campaign to liberate Palestine from Zionism (especially BDS)?

Keywords: settler colonialism; logic of elimination; Palestine; comparative colonial studies; blood quanta.

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui: Aloha. Before we dive in, I want to ask if you'd be willing to share a bit about your personal and professional background.

[1] This conversation has its origins in a radio interview of Patrick Wolfe conducted by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui on her public affairs show, "Indigenous Politics: From Native New England and Beyond", from July 13, 2010. What appears here is an expanded version that is updated to reflect our ongoing dialogue into 2012.

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Patrick Wolfe: Yes, certainly, I'm a professional working academic, I'm afraid. I set up the teaching of Koori history – that's Indigenous southeast Australian history – at the University of Melbourne and introduced elders being paid proper money to give lectures. I gave up after a few years because I'm a Gubbah – a White guy – and it seemed wrong to me that a White guy should be teaching Aboriginal history when there weren't any Aboriginal people also teaching it. I don't mind White guys teaching it so long as they're not the only one.

So I left that, and I'm glad to say that the University of Melbourne Aboriginal history section subsequently thrived quite well. I've since written about a lot of comparative Indigenous issues, partly because of the experience of teaching Koori history in Melbourne – there's a lot of American students there because exchange students tend to look for something they can't do at home. The University of Melbourne offers very few things you can't do in California. Koori History – that's one thing you can't do even in San Francisco. So I used to get a disproportionately large number of U.S. students and when I'd say to them: «Why are you doing this course? – Where is your interest in Aboriginal history coming from?», ninety-five percent of them, even the Black ones, would say: «Well, I'm interested in civil rights and maybe doing some kind of work with Black groups and I wanted to come and do some work with Black groups in Australia».

To which I would say: «Yeah, but how about Indigenous people? – How about Native Americans? That's the parallel. Just because Aboriginal Australians are called Black – that's just some kind of shared name, misleadingly bracketing them together on the basis of skin color. The real parallel is dispossessed Indigenous people, you know about them? Where's your interest there?». And their eyes would glaze over and they'd say: «Well, I don't think I ever met one», to which I'd say: «Well probably not knowingly, but I bet you have». And it would go from there.

So that led me to think that there's more to this than – when I say "just", I don't mean in a belittling way – there's more to this than just Indigenous history in southeast Australia. There's a whole thing going on here around Indigenous politics and the consequences of invasion and dispossession and genocide and it's not limited to Australia. I wanted to see what we can say that's universal about Indigenous dispossession everywhere and what's particular to local situations.

JKK: "Black" is a term used to describe Indigenous peoples in Australia and that comes out of a British colonial history, right?

PW: I wouldn't like to say it only comes out of a British colonial history, because Indigenous people in Australia very happily call themselves Black. If you go to a party – on occasions I've been to a party where I've been the only non-Indigenous, Gubbah person – and they call it a "Black Out". Kooris call themselves Blackfellas, and we're Whitefellas. No doubt it also came out of some kind of colonial background but it's been taken over and made their own by Indigenous people for their own ends and for their own identity purposes.

JKK: I know from time that I've spent in graduate school in Aotearoa/New Zealand, at the University of Auckland, Maori also now self-identity, or did more strongly in an earlier period in the seventies and eighties, as Blacks. And you mention *Gubbah* or Whitefella. In terms of you self-identifying that way, that is really unusual for a lot of White men. Could you speak a little bit more to that in terms of that self-identification and that acknowledgment, especially in the midst of Indigenous peoples?

PW: I am an Australian settler. That doesn't mean that I have voluntarily dispossessed anybody, it doesn't mean that I've stolen anybody's child, it doesn't mean that I've participated in any massacres – it's not about my individual consciousness and free will. In terms of my individual free will, I'm a reluctant settler. I would rather not be existing on somebody else's stolen land. But the fact of the matter is that I wouldn't have had a university job if Indigenous people hadn't had their land stolen from them in Australia.

So, in a structural sense, in terms of the history that has put me where I am and Indigenous people where they are, my individual consciousness, my personal attitude has got nothing to do with this. I am a beneficiary and a legatee of the dispossession and the continuing elimination of Aboriginal people in Australia. As such, whatever my personal consciousness, I am a settler, which is to say *Gubbah* in Indigenous terminology, so I am happy to accept that terminology.

JKK: In Hawaii there is some debate about theorists of what is being termed "Asian settler colonialism" that deals with the contentious history of Asian immigrants coming in as plantation labor under coercive or exploitative conditions. Here I am referring namely, but not exclusively to the edited volume by Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura titled *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawaii*. It prompts questions as to whether or not we should discern different kinds of settlers, and it begs the question of whether all settlers are colonialists. This leads me to ask, where you see race fitting into your analysis of what constitutes settler colonialism, especially whiteness.

PW: Okay, that's a really tricky and interesting one, as you know. When I'm in Hawaii, I'm a *Haole*, obviously. I may only be a *Haole* for three days visiting but I'm a *Haole*. Yes, of course, Japanese indentured people, Filipinos, a whole lot of other non-U.S., non-White people from the Pacific were put to work in horrific conditions on pineapple and other plantations in Hawaii two or three generations ago, so those people have endured colonial exploitation, there's no question about it whatsoever.

I think a parallel there would be, for instance, enslaved Africans in the U.S. Now, looked at from their point of view, they have experienced a colonial history, and it is therefore not right to lump them with together with the colonizers, the White folks who brought them there under oppressive and coercive conditions in the first place. Now of course I accept that, that degrees exist within the population that dispossessed and replaced Native peoples, of course I accept that. But can we just bracket that off for a moment and come back to it?

JKK: Yes, but I want to point out that Chinese, Japanese, and Filipinos were drawn to the continental US for agricultural labor – and with the Filipinos, they came as colonial subjects – so wouldn't that be the parallel in the US and not enslaved Africans? Isn't the question of chattel slavery different here?

PW: From the Native point of view, when it's a zero-sum contest – you or me, for land, for livelihood, for the places that are special, sacred to you that keep your society alive, culturally, spiritually and

every other way as well your economic subsistence, just putting food on your table – it doesn't matter if the people are enslaved or coerced or co-opted, they are still taking your food. They are still part of the invasive society that is taking your land over and driving you off. They may be an unwilling part, just as I said to you I'm a reluctant settler. They may be a lot more reluctant than I am in so far as they may be forced – I chose to go to Australia, after all.

But nonetheless, structurally, in the terms I was talking about before, like it or not, whether or not they collaborate with Indigenous people, they remain part of the settler project. *Asian Settler Colonialism* is edited by a couple of Japanese-descended settlers who have had the courage to come out and say: «We have come through the colonial plantation experience, our people have suffered, but nonetheless, vis-a-vis Natives, vis-a-vis Kanaka Maoli, we are settlers. Which is to say, structurally, we are part of the social process of dispossession». That doesn't mean that they haven't suffered, that doesn't mean they're bad guys. Willingly or not, enslaved or not, at the point of a gun or not, they arrived as part of the settler-colonial project. That doesn't make them settlers in the same sense as the colonizers who coerced them to participate – of course not – but it does make them perforce part of the settler-colonial process of dispossession and elimination. I can't stress strongly enough that it's NOT a matter of volition on their part, and certainly not of culpability. It's just a structural fact.

JKK: Also, I want to note that what I think is really important about what that they are doing and you've just mentioned it, in terms of the social process of dispossession – they do talk about settler *practices*. And that's of course part of the subtitle – *The Habits of Everyday Life*. And I think that that's what's so striking about your work is that you insist that settler colonialism is a practice.

PW: Okay, well why don't we go back to something I've already said, which is the number of U.S. students that would come to Australia and say that they saw a comparison between the politics of Indigenous people in Australia and the politics of African-Americans, of Black people in the United States, the descendants of African slaves? I found myself thinking: «Well, what IS the difference?». And, of course, the difference is that, in order to establish the European colo-

nial society, two entirely different contributions were extracted from these separate populations. So far as enslaved people, or you may say convicts to Australia, or indentured people – South Asians going to Guyana or Fiji, wherever it may be – the coerced, subordinated labor that is brought in by the Europeans to work the land in the place of the Natives – they're there for their labor. It's their bodies that are colonized in the case of enslaved people who are subject to being bought and sold, that's what they provide. Indigenous people, by contrast, provide the land. Their – Indigenous people's – historical role in settler colonialism is to disappear so far as the Europeans go, to get out of the way, to be eliminated, in order that the Europeans can bring in their subordinated, coerced labor, mix that labor with the soil, which is to say set it to work on the expropriated land and produce a surplus profit for the colonizer.

So there are three points to this triangle. There is the colonizer – and I won't just say European because say, for example, in the case of the Japanese, the same kind of thing has applied. I'm a European colonizer, though, so let's talk about European colonialism, which in any event is the bigger global phenomenon. So we'll say Europeans in that sense. The European applies coerced and/or enslaved labor to the land which has been expropriated, which has been taken away, which has been stolen from Indigenous people. So at first you can say: invasion generally is a violent process because nobody gives up their land voluntarily. Whatever the Europeans say about Natives rolling up their blankets and fading away, like the Israelis say about the Palestinians, dissolving into the night – that doesn't happen. People do not give up places where their old people are buried, where they have been born and bred for generations, where they've lived, where their gods are. They do not give that up easily, so it's invariably a violent process.

Europeans usually win, helped by alien diseases and cannons and all the rest of it. Europeans usually win in that violent confrontation. Let's call that the frontier, though the frontier is a very misleading term because it suggests a nice clear black and white line – Natives on one side, Europeans on the other. It doesn't work that way. The frontier, it seemed to me the more I thought about it, isn't just a line in space, albeit a misleading line in space – there are all sorts of transitions going on backward and forward across it so it's not a hard and

fast line – but it's also a line in time. What happens once the Natives have been violently suppressed, assuming they have been – have been pacified, depending on whose terminology you use – there are still some left around.

Now, the colonizers have to establish a colonial society in their place, on their land. To do that, you have to have a system of laws and regulations – the playing field has got to look level. You're bringing migrants in. They can be unruly, they can want rights that they're often not given first off. A rule of law has to be applied and applied consistently, otherwise the incoming settler society would get out of order. Therefore the Natives who have survived the initial catastrophe of invasion and violent dispossession – you can't just carry on shooting them on sight. It doesn't work for the settler rule of law that has to appear to be conducted fairly and legitimately.

Therefore the way in which remaining Natives are eliminated shifts – it becomes more legal and more genteel. It looks better. It is necessary for settlers to continue eliminating Natives for all sorts of reasons, but one is a very important political one. If you're a settler, theoretically at least, you've come with a social contract, you've done all those European things involving subjecting yourself to the rule of the sovereign and you've consented, the whole deal. Natives never did that – their rule of law was prior to colonial rule, independent of it. It springs from a separate source. The colonizers' legal system simply can't deal with that. It can't deal with something that originates outside of itself. So, even on a political level, quite apart from the economic competition, all traces of Native alternatives need to be suppressed or contained or in some way eliminated. This continues after the so-called frontier era but, as I said, in all sorts of genteel ways. Territorially, Natives tend to get banged up on reservations or stations or missions or whatever it is. Now, they may be still alive, and the rhetoric might well shift so that, instead of being marauding savages who are going to rape the White man's women and all this sort of stuff, which is the justification for killing them on the frontier, instead of that they become a kind of romantic dying race and it's the job of the missionary to smooth the pillow of their passing. The rhetoric shifts radically, but the outcome remains consistent with elimination.

When you gather people together and contain them in a fixed locale, you are still – you the colonizer – you are still vacating their erst-

while territory and rendering it available for colonization, whether it's farming or pastoralism or plantations, whatever it is. They're not on the land anymore. They're confined to a mission. So, even though the missions (or stations or reservations) are held out as a process of civilizing – «We are giving them the boons, the benefits of this superior culture that we have historically invented» – even though the rhetoric shifts, just by confining them, you continue to eliminate them, to clear their territory to make way for colonial settlement.

You go further down the track, and assimilation begins to kick in, whether it's in the U.S. or Australia – and, I think, in Hawai'i. Native identity gets compromised – as, in your wonderful book, *Hawaiian Blood*, you've shown in the Hawaiian case, and in other cases as well – with blood quantum regulations. Blood quantum eliminates Natives from the reckoning of authentic Natives who count. Of course, in the colonial situation, any Native person is liable to have non-Native relatives somewhere in their ancestry. That's a routine outcome of being invaded. It's used as another way of excluding Natives or eliminating them.

JKK: Yes, the contemporary legal definition of "native Hawaiian" as a "descendant with at least one-half blood quantum of individuals inhabiting the Hawaiian Islands prior to 1778" originated in the Hawaiian Homes Commission Act of 1921 (HHCA) in which the US Congress allotted approximately 200,000 acres of land in small areas across the main islands to be leased for residential, pastoral, and agricultural purposes by eligible "native Hawaiians". Many Kanaka Maoli (indigenous Hawaiians) contest the federal and state definition of "native Hawaiian" at fifty-percent not only because it is so exclusionary, but because it undercuts indigenous Hawaiian epistemologies that define identity on the basis of one's kinship and genealogy. Thus, I emphasize the strategic, socially embedded, and political aspects of these indigenous practices.

The blood quantum rule operates through a genocidal logic in both cultural and legal contexts and undermines identity claims based on genealogy that are expansive. In the blood quantum and legal debates about property during the debates that lead to the passage of the HHCA, issues of where the Chinese and Japanese stood in Hawai'i – in relation both to whites and Hawaiians – were prominent. Eventu-

ally, I realized that in many ways, some subtle, others crude, the racialization of Hawaiians was co-constructed in relation to Chinese and Japanese presence in the Islands. As I detail in the book, both elite whites and Hawaiians framed the post-overthrow push to rehabilitate Kanaka Maoli in anti-Asian terms by contrasting Kanaka Maoli as US citizens and the Chinese, and especially Japanese as "aliens". During the early Twentieth Century, the whiteness of American citizenship was sustained by a series of Asian exclusions and this racialization of Asians as perpetual "outsiders" would play a key role in the outcome of Hawaiian blood quantum debates.

In Hawai'i at this time, Asian groups occupied a racial place somewhat similar to African Americans in their structural relationship to whites during the Reconstruction in that they were considered an economic and political threat. The emancipation of black slaves motivated Southern whites to search for new systems of racial and economic control and by the 1890s, they passed Jim Crow segregation laws to isolate and intimidate African Americans. In Hawai'i, like the US continent, white Americans perceived the Japanese as a distinct danger as both a as a source of labor competition and a nationalist threat in the emerging world order. Their presence in Hawai'i was seen as antithetical to the goals of Americanizing the Islands, especially after World War I, a concern that only grew by the time of the HHCA debates, when their numbers were increasing in the islands.

So, with that in mind as a particular context, let us turn back to the question of slavery, whiteness, and indigeneity.

PW: This, I think, is where you can get the contrast between enslaved people and Indigenous people very clearly, and also how you can get the way that the process of elimination continues. It's a structure. It's an ongoing process, not a one-off event. It continues right through colonial society. And in the case of blood quantum, it comes through very clearly. Let's think of the U.S. example. As I said, the enslaved and their descendants who were bought and sold were used for one purpose, and that purpose was labor, whereas Indigenous people were there for one purpose, that was to disappear, to surrender their land. Given that Africans were valuable property, you wanted as many as you could get. So the offspring of an enslaved person and a White partner, it doesn't matter what their skin color is, how they present

phenotypically, how light or dark they are, they remain a slave, they're valuable property. But, of course, if you're out on the western frontier of the United States, the last thing you want is more Indians, so you're murdering them, or you're cooping them up on reservations.

But what happens racially? What happens to the offspring of a Native, usually a woman – ninety-nine times out of a hundred it's a woman, right? – the offspring of a Native woman and a colonizer experiences the opposite of what happens to Black people. With Black people, any amount of African blood whatsoever makes you a slave. Initially, this meant that offspring inherited the status of their mothers (though Maryland was an early exception) but, as time went by, slavery became the lot of everyone with African ancestry. After emancipation, this situation became racialized, so that anyone with African ancestry was classified as Black, a situation that reached its apogee in the one-drop rule, which continues into the present in an informal, unstated kind of way. You can have blue eyes and blond hair but, if somewhere back in your ancestry there's any Black person – bam, you're a slave or, today, under the one-drop rule, you're a Black person. Compared to that, let's look at what happens to Natives – whose role, as we've said, is to vanish from the land rather than to provide labor. In their case, the opposite applies. The colonial system wants fewer and fewer Natives, and guess what? – it seeps through into the way they're racialized, into their very identities, the identities the colonial society tries to impose upon them.

So the Native case is opposite to the one-drop rule, which makes (isn't this fantastic? – there's a real irony here) makes Black blood absolutely powerful in relation to White blood. In the case of Native blood, by contrast, any admixture of White blood compromises your indigeneity, makes you a half-blood or a half-caste or whatever racist term serves to eliminate people. So my point is that invasion doesn't stop at the frontier. It carries right on, right through colonial society in these less violent – that's what I meant by more genteel – ways, more thoroughly legal, bureaucratic ways. But the end outcome, which is eliminating the alternative, prior Native presence, is consistent. Is that clear enough?

JKK: Yes it is. And you did mention earlier that settler colonialism, you call it a zero-sum game, and I know that elsewhere you've referred to the dominant feature of its exploitative nature as a winner-take-all

project. And that's what you mean by total replacement. So thinking through in terms of the legal disappearance or things that are based on legal mechanisms of civilizing Indigenous peoples, it's precisely through that rather than, say, through massacres that settler colonial societies can continue to describe their projects as ones based on progress or that they're supposed to be seen as benign or kind to the Native.

PW: Absolutely – «We have come bearing you a gift, the gift of civilization and advancement». And assimilation, which ultimately has the effect of destroying Native society, reducing them demographically, is invariably – and I haven't come across a single settler colony where this doesn't happen – invariably, assimilation is held out as giving Natives the same opportunities as the White man. You steal children at the age of three and you put them in boarding schools and you abuse them, often sexually as well as psychologically, for years on end. Very often – except in the case of a few remarkable people – you put people out at the other end of that system who suffer for the rest of their life with appalling social and psychological pathologies. They'll still be prejudiced against, picked on in the street by cops because they look different, and all the rest of it. They won't actually get any of the advantages that they were promised would be the fruits of the civilizing experience. They will rather have been completely messed up, their families and the wider Native society will have suffered as a consequence, and this is held out as a special gift of civilization, giving the Native the same opportunities as the White man.

JKK: We have been discussing a couple examples of Anglo-settler societies, Australia and the United States, and can also obviously bring Canada and Aotearoa /New Zealand into the picture more. Yet I would suggest that the average American would probably be reluctant to see the U.S.A. alongside the other three nations, given their ongoing ties to the British monarchy. Can you speak to that in relation to the persistent myth of American exceptionalism, that idea that the formation of the U.S.A. was about liberation, freedom and equality framed as the opposite of any monarchical society?

PW: Right. Firstly, perhaps this illustrates the answer I'm trying to give: when Chief Joseph and the Nez Perce were fleeing California,

they were ultimately tracked down, with appalling consequences, by the U.S. Cavalry. But when they made their great trek, where were they headed? The answer is Canada, so they had no doubt as to who was the worse settler colonizer between the republican and democratic U.S. or a monarchy. And they were by no means – this is not in defense of monarchy, by the way – they were by no means the only colonized people who tried to escape across the Canadian border. African people did too. So, without defending monarchy, let's just say that republican egalitarianism is not a good thing for people who are not part of the club.

The problem with republican citizenship and popular democracy is that those who are outside the realm of this citizenship have no rights. It's a profoundly dehumanizing segregation of the rest of the world from yourself – you citizens, who participate in all these contractual deals to run your society equally and all the rest of it. In terms of what political system is involved, the important question is not whether you speak English, French or Dutch, not whether you've got a king or a queen or you're republican. The only thing that really counts in regard to settler colonialism is the outcome for the Natives.

I can't imagine a Native confronting a poisoned water hole or a bayonet or whatever instrument of violence they're forced to confront... I can't imagine them saying: «Well, at least I'm being killed by a republican rather than a monarchist». I mean, what sort of difference is that going to make? So let's get below the surface of those political distinctions to the real concrete relationships that are applying here. This leads us to the distinction between what I call settler colonialism, which refers to a foreign society invading a Native society and trying to take over all of it so as to replace the Natives rather than use them as labor. Settler colonialism brings its own labor. It tries to eliminate the Natives and do something completely new with the land that was theirs.

JKK: So, this gets at what makes a settler society different than, say, British relations to India.

PW: The situation in India was quite different. There, the colonizers didn't go to get rid of Indians and import English people in their place. Quite the contrary, the colonizers went to sit on top of

native society and set it to work for them on their own land. So it's a bit like the relationship of slavery insofar as natives were valuable. They were indispensable to the project of extracting surplus value through colonialism. The British went to India for mining and to do things like grow jute and opium and tea and cotton and a whole lot of primary products that would then be made up in the metropolis – Manchester cotton mills and so on. The industrial revolution, which in most European history books is represented as something that was internal to Europe and proves how superior Europeans are, was a global phenomenon that took raw materials that were made up in these factories from the situation of colonial exploitation, whereupon it used the same colonies as expanding markets for these factories' finished products. Primary production may have been going on in the deep south in the U.S., it may have been going on in India, it may have been going on in Egypt – to cite three that reference cotton, since I mentioned Manchester. The point is that the industrial revolution not only required settler colonialism in order to function. It also required other forms of colonialism, as in the case of the British-Indian colonial regime, which I call franchise colonialism. Franchise colonialism required a situation where Whites oversaw a system in which natives worked for them. Now that means that the natives remain a large majority, so Whites had to have native collaborators to help run the system. They had to have superior access to violence and all the rest of it, better troops. It's always a kind of fragile, vulnerable situation colonizing somewhere like India, or, for that matter, a franchise colony like the Dutch East Indies – today, it's Indonesia – was for the Dutch. When the colonial-nationalist movement gets under way, resists the Europeans, and finally throws them out, the Whites turn out not to have been established in the same way that settler colonizers have been established. As I've said, in going to wherever, Australia, settlers didn't go to get Aborigines to work for them – at least, not as their first priority. They went to Australia to replace Aborigines and themselves become Australians, so their children would be Australians and Australia would then go on forever.

Europeans in franchise colonies like India, they go to sit on top of native society. England remains home. They send their children back to boarding school in England. When they turn sixty, they retire back to England before encroaching senility can spoil the illusion

of their superhumanity. They remain based in England, overseeing the natives in a different kind of colony. Therefore, come the success of the colonial-nationalist movement, when finally the English get thrown out and they go back to London, they vanish, and the faces on the legislative benches change color. Indians take over. They tend, unfortunately, not to alter the system that the British imposed on them too much because the elites who ran the nationalist movement were educated at Oxford and Cambridge and the British knew who they were handing over to. Basically, they were handing over to brown Englishmen, so they weren't the kind of changes that you'd hope for from a national independence movement. Nonetheless, the fact is that the British had remained a minority dependent upon native labor and therefore native society was ultimately in a position to throw them out. By contrast, the victims of settler genocide, all the programs of elimination that have gone on in settler colonies, those Natives become a minority and can't realistically dream of sending the Whitefellas home.

So it's a different situation. And if I may say at this point, what I mean by settler colonialism is precisely this drive to elimination, this system of winner-take-all. I don't just mean that settler colonies are colonies that happen to have settlers in them. There were tea planters in British India. People go on and on at me about the French in Algeria, and rather like we said earlier, what difference does it make if you're monarchical or republican? In the case of French colonialism, the French colonies aren't just places that we rule from outside. They're part of France. In formal political terms, Algeria was meant to be part of mainland France, so the French settlers who went there were seen as somehow different to settlers elsewhere. It was a settler society that somehow was more organically wedded to the mother country than somewhere like Hawai'i (at least, prior to statehood) or the United States or Aotearoa/New Zealand. All the same, the fact of the matter is that the French settlers relied on native labor. Come the Algerian independence movement, they get thrown out. Whatever the constitutional niceties, whether they're meant to be part of France or not doesn't matter. They're there to be thrown out because they're a minority dependent on native labor. You can say something similar about South Africa, where Whites are something like fifteen, sixteen percent of the population. Yes, they're settlers, yes they stayed there,

but it's just a colony that happens to have settlers in it. It's not a settler colony in my sense. Does that make sense?

JKK: Most definitely. And also, I am thinking it through in terms of the notion of progress and the notion of the past, one of the most cited passages in your work is that «invasion is a structure and not an event». I would like it if you could speak to the persistent ideological notion of settler colonies that settler colonialism was just an event, that invasion was merely an event, and that that is how they are able to maintain the farce that it's long past, rather than an ongoing process.

PW: As an Indigenous person, you're very well aware of these things. These are some of the best targeted questions I've ever had, so if I could just thank you for that and also acknowledge that, because you're Indigenous, you know what you're talking about in a way that so few scholars do.

So, yes, settler invasion is an ongoing process. That's why I remain a beneficiary and a legatee of the invasion of Australia. That's why I categorize myself as a settler. The Prime Minister of Australia, the then Prime Minister John Howard, refused to apologize to Indigenous people for the abduction of the so called "stolen generations" of Aboriginal people, generally of mixed ancestry, who were taken away by the Australian state. We're not sure how many. It's somewhere around one in five to one in seven Aboriginal children were stolen from their families by the Australian state or by various states within the Commonwealth of Australia throughout the twentieth century.

And a great movement arose to get Mr. Howard to apologize on behalf of the Australian state for what happened. I personally think that movement was a great mistake, because what happened was that the whole issue of Aboriginal rights came to depend on whether or not one man would apologize for the stolen generations – not for the frontier homicides, not for the initial seizure of land or two centuries of systematic destruction, all the rest of it. And also the problem was that an apology would enable them to say: «Okay, now we've apologized, now everyone can go home, forget about it and move on». This is exactly what the subsequent Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, did say when he issued his apology. He didn't ask whether or not Aboriginal people would accept his apology. He just unilaterally declared that his

apology meant that Australia should now move on. No question of compensation, no question of reparations, nothing like that. In fact, the reverse – the apology provided Rudd with a pretext to rule reparations out, explicitly and deliberately, at the same time. So I think that there are all sorts of problems with the whole apology business.

But nonetheless, to get back to your question, the reason that John Howard refused to apologize (which actually was tactically very stupid – as I said, if he realized he could get away with an apology and have it all over within a week, that would have suited him much better) but anyway, the reason that this bull-necked man refused to apologize was, as he kept saying over and over again: «Yes, bad things went on in the past, but I wasn't there, I didn't do anything wrong, I didn't kill anybody, I didn't steal any children. It's a later time now», failing to recognize that history results from causes and from preconditions, and that the cause and the precondition for contemporary Australian affluence and democracy and all the rest of it is the initial robbery, genocide and continuing elimination of Aboriginal people. Without that happening, as I said, I couldn't have had a job in History at La Trobe University.

So that's the sense in which it's very important to acknowledge that invasion is something that reverberates through continuing history in all sorts of ways. And the Indigenous presence, the Indigenous alternative needs to be suppressed. Either that, or we come to a fair deal. Now, coming to a fair deal doesn't mean finding a bunch of coconuts – brown on the outside and White on the inside – and setting them up in state-designed bureaucracies that just become yet another organ of the settler state. It doesn't mean that. It means handing over to Native sovereignty. How are you going to run your affairs? Who are you going to choose, as opposed to elect? – you don't need to go through the Westminster system. Whatever your system of choosing – an elder who will speak for you, or elders who will speak for you, whatever you choose – you go for it, and when you're ready, we'll talk together about what we can agree on. Anything less than that is a state-fabricated charade which is not only running parallel to the real challenge of an open negotiation between an invaded people and their invaders. Actually, these pre-fabricated, pretending-to-be-Native but actually part of the White colonial system bureaucracies are part of the invasion, because they take away Native initiative. They channel it

into areas, into bureaucratic zones, that are always already pre-dominated by being part of the colonial bureaucracy.

JKK: And that actually resonates with what you said earlier in the interview around the colonials themselves really not wanting to acknowledge anything that exists prior to their own system. And that's what Indigenous scholar from Australia Aileen Moreton-Robinson, who's a premier scholar of Whiteness studies there talks about: the anxiety of settler colonial societies regarding that persistent Indigenous sovereignty question.

PW: That anxiety is crucial and very telling. I think it has huge political potential. Aileen Moreton-Robinson nails it perfectly.

JKK: Now, I want to go back to something – you mentioned Palestinians earlier. And we've been talking a bit about American exceptionalism. Certainly there is a question, especially as of late, with the recent attack on the Gaza Freedom Flotilla – the persistent question of Israeli exceptionalism undergirded by American power. I wonder if you could speak to the question of Israeli-occupied Palestine and perhaps in relation to not only settler colonialism as a process but also the Boycott, Divest and Sanction movement.

PW: Well firstly, blinded in ways that one can sympathize with by the Holocaust, people look at Israelis as victims. And, of course, those who died in the Holocaust were victims, as well as their families, and the children who have been subjected to the memories of Auschwitz survivors and so on, and who've had to live with their guilt. Of course those people are victims. But, it's rather like saying the Japanese in Hawai'i suffered terribly in the plantations but that doesn't stop them being part of the settler-colonial process.

We're not talking about whether individuals are victims or not. We're talking about the fact that, from 1882 on, which is when the first Zionist settlement in Palestine was established, the first so-called *aliya*, which means "uplift", which means "ascent to the Promised Land", European Jews who were suffering pogroms and oppression and all sorts of horrific things in Europe that one should never understate, European Jews' solution to that – or the Zionist solution to

that, I'm sorry, not all European Jews' – the Zionist solution to that was: «We are being persecuted, especially within eastern Europe – the so-called Pale of Settlement, the Polish/southwest Russian border, but also traditionally throughout Europe – we are being persecuted because we haven't a got a nation. We haven't got a place that we can call our own, with our own sovereignty and independence. So, like the other peoples around us in nineteenth-century Europe, we need a nation with its own territory».

The only problem is there's no land left in Europe to found a nation in, so, initially they were thinking Argentina, then they thought Uganda, at one point the Portuguese offered them Angola, but increasingly it became Palestine – the place, they claimed, that Jews originated from, before being driven out by the Romans in seventy A.D., when the Second Temple was destroyed, this whole mythology. It actually is mythology, in the erroneous sense – there were Jews all over the Diaspora well before seventy A.D. Moreover not all of those who were in Palestine left, but that's a different story. The point is, that some of the European arm of world Jewry who were generally called Ashkenazim, meaning European Jewry – as opposed to Sephardim, who are the Jews who were driven out Iberia, out of Spain and Portugal in the fifteenth century and tended to settle in places like Morocco, as opposed to Yemenis and other Mizrahim who were in places like Iraq and Libya and so on – the point is that some members of the Ashkenazi branch of Jewry decided upon Zionism – though Zionism largely remained a minority tendency until the Nazi era. Zionists decided they would establish a civilized, secular, European colonial nation-state like France or Germany, which had ceased being monarchies and had united themselves and become secular, church- and state-separated states in the nineteenth century. They were going to have one of those in Palestine. So they set out to establish an autonomous state based on agricultural communities that would be self-sufficient. Of course, having been excluded from agriculture and productive industry in Europe, so that they'd been forced into parasitic occupations like money-lending and condemned as such – this is where the racist image of the Jew as greedy hoarder came from – these people arrive in Palestine quite incompetent as agriculturalists.

Yet they want to exclude the Natives. They want to build a Jewish-only nation-state in somebody else's country, Palestine. That's

what settler colonialism is. So they set about firstly persuading colonial authorities who ruled Palestine, first the Ottoman Empire and then, after World War I, the British Empire under a mandate granted by the League of Nations. The so-called *Yishuv*, the Jewish settlers in Palestine, set about firstly getting the colonial powers to allow more and more Jewish immigration into Palestine from Europe and, secondly, expanding their contiguous land base so as to build a colonial state-in-waiting there.

So they're different to an ordinary settler colony in that they had to proceed through legal channels. This they did, until they reached the point where they were strong enough to throw out both the colonial authorities, in this case the British mandate authorities, and complete the job of driving Palestinians off their land. This happened in the *nakba,* the calamity, the catastrophe as it's called, of 1948, that overtook Palestinians, when something like sixty-five percent of the Palestinian people were violently driven from their homes, driven to flee outside Mandate Palestine. Their houses were taken from them – either bulldozed or blown up or, more often than not, had Jewish settlers put into them, these people in many cases being Holocaust victims who had been brought from Europe.

So there's tremendous world sympathy – indeed, the United Nations vote to divide Palestine into Jewish and Palestinian sectors, which took place on November 29, 1947, only happened because the Soviet Union finally came around and cast its votes in favor of Israel. Why did they do that? Because they chose to read Israel as an anti-British colonial movement rather than as a settler-colonial movement. Zionism has these two faces. Now, it is very odd, is it not, that the last European settler colony to be established on Earth – which is Israel, which has displaced Palestinians from their own country and replaced them with Jews, has stolen their country – that the last one on Earth (Tibet isn't a European colony) should have been set up in 1948, after the U.N. declaration, and at a time when decolonization was the international climate of the moment?

After World War II, the United Nations was all about the British leaving India, the British and French and Portuguese and Spanish leaving Africa, the French and the British leaving southeast Asia, the Dutch leaving the East Indies, that's the mood of the moment. Yet Israel is set up at the same time. A settler colony is established in an

anti-colonial atmosphere. That is bizarre until one understands that Zionism has two faces: one is it's a resistance to persecution, the Holocaust being the ultimate extreme, but it's a persecution that goes on in Europe. The other is, it's a settler colonial movement, so it's as if the abused child has grown up to be an abuser – the Zionist response to the persecution of Jews in Europe being to steal somebody else's country outside of Europe.

So, once it's understood in that dual way – as having two faces, I mean – that Zionism is both a response to persecution and a settler-colonial movement – then you're partly back to the situation of Hawaiians in relation to the Japanese or Native Americans in relation to enslaved Africans: «Yes, these people have suffered but, hullo, they're driving me off my country, they're killing me». They're part of a settler system, regardless of their personal history and their consciousness. Palestinians own that country. They're being driven out of it and being replaced, with the approval, the sanction and the military and economic support of the West.

We, as Australians, as people from the United States – I distinguish Hawai'i from that, and I distinguish Native Americans from that because you're not part of the system – but people like me, like it or not and I certainly don't like it, are responsible for the contemporary, current-day Israeli colonization of Palestine. Now, in terms of the time-scale I talked about previously in places like the U.S. and Australia, that is like going back before the missions and before the assimilation. It's still the frontier era in Israel/Palestine. There's no assimilation going on. Palestinians aren't being given land rights in certain places. They're still at the frontier invasion stage, and it's in this day and age, in the twenty-first century.

When genocide was going on in the nineteenth-century United States, international communications were different. There weren't cell phones that you could film with, there wasn't a whole global communications framework whereby what was going on could be seen. I'm not justifying it, but it's pretty different to something going on under the nose of the world, in full view of the world and still being suppressed and successfully lied about, which is what's happening to the settler colonization, the invasion, of Palestine as we speak.

When students or people who've heard my talks ask me: «How did the Europeans ever get away with the atrocities that they committed on the Australian and American frontiers? – How could a Wounded Knee or a Coniston massacre go unavenged? – How could whole peoples be driven from their ancestral homelands in broad daylight?». When they ask me this question, which they very often do, I have to answer: «Why are you surprised? They didn't even have the internet or satellite TV in the nineteenth century. We have those things today, we have instant global communication, events relayed live into people's living rooms, but settler-colonial outrages are being perpetrated, nineteenth-century style, under our noses in Occupied Palestine every day of the week. So why should the nineteenth century have been any different? There's no reason for surprise».

JKK: Yes that's right, and does that suggest to me that you do support the BDS campaign?

PW: Absolutely, I have nothing to do with anything Israeli whatsoever. And anti-Zionist Israeli Jews, they support it too. They're saying: «This is wrong – not in our name, don't help it».

JKK: As you know, I serve on the advisory board for the U.S. Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (USACBI) as well as the broader boycott movement for sure.

PW: Again, absolutely, I'm completely in support of it. Actually, in the contemporary U.S. and Australian academy, that does involve a risk. The Zionist lobby – please don't call it the Jewish lobby, by no means all Jews are Zionists and, by the way, not all Zionists are Jewish. We're talking about a political movement – Zionism. Anti-Zionism and anti-semitism have nothing to do with each other. The Zionist lobby in countries like the U.S. and Australia is so strong. Helen Thomas is a recent example, even though I think her remarks were ill-judged and stupid. Nonetheless, what's happened to her so quickly, this grand old lady of United States journalism, how that day she was suddenly forced to resign – doesn't that show the power and the risk that you take when you speak out in favor of the oppressed, invaded Palestinian nation?

JKK: Yes, and when you mention that in Palestine right now it is the frontier era, I mean this for me really highlights the issue.

I saw for myself in January 2012 when I traveled there as part of a 5-scholar delegation. Obviously within settler colonial studies as a field of study for intellectual work in the academy, you know, comparative studies are important, but the settler colonials themselves undertook and still undertake a comparative approach to their own policies, their own military tactics. And I think that Israel modeling its occupation of Palestine in ways similar to what early Americans did to tribal nations throughout the nineteenth century in North America is really key. Speaking to a different comparative angle, could you offer your analysis of analogies between Israel and South Africa?

PW: Yes, I don't accept that apartheid and what's going on in Palestine are the same thing, for the reason that the Bantustans, the special native places that the South African government set up, were set up for the purpose of exploiting native labor. You were confined to your Bantustan unless you were being domestic labor, or you were working the mines or the farms or the factories of White South Africa, in which case you had to run around with a pass showing you were on your way to or from work, you had permission to be there. But the Bantustans were pools of labor which the workers would be taken out of and used as suited the White authorities, the apartheid authorities.

Palestinians are just being driven out. They're no pool of labor. Sure, they come in handy as cheap and hyperexploitable labor so long as they're still around, but Israel's primary goal is not to exploit them but to get rid of them. This is why they're energetically and systematically being replaced by anybody but a Palestinian. Bring in a million Russians, call them Jews, it's fine. A significant portion of them are Christians. They end up growing up and getting arrested in Israel running around in Nazi uniforms. Doesn't matter – they're not Palestinian. That's very different to South Africa, where segregation was for the purposes of exploitation for labor. For Palestinians, segregation is being marginalized. Israel is doing everything it can to free itself from any hint of dependence on Palestinian labor because it wants to get rid of them. So Zionism IS a form of apartheid in that it's racist, exclusive and oppressive. Israel's behavior squarely fits the international definition of the crime of apartheid under the 1973 International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid and so on. All the same, it's not premised on the same basis as South African apartheid was – it's premised on elimination rather than exploitation. We have to recognize different forms of apartheid. They're all unacceptable.

JKK: And that really gets back to the core which is the Indigenous sovereignty question rather than a color line. I want to ask you something else as we're wrapping up the interview. Since your book, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, was published just over a decade ago, the field of settler studies has grown to focus on collaborative and comparative theories of this process. I want to ask you how you see this new field developing.

PW: Well with mixed feelings. As you say, that book came out rather early – embarrassingly early, actually, seeing as I haven't done another book since. As a result, since it was fairly early, and it keeps getting quoted and cited, people quite often ask me: «What do you think?» – almost as if they're asking me: «What's happened to your offspring?», which is completely inappropriate. I didn't invent settler-colonial studies. Natives have been experts in the field for centuries.

I have mixed feelings, to be honest. What for me is a political practice – my intellectual practice is an activist practice so far as I'm concerned, which is not to say that I skimp on the facts. It's not to say that I cut corners. It's rather to say that I think the more you look at the facts, the more they stand up. The more rigorously you conduct your research, the more you establish that dispossessed Indigenous people have got the most substantial grounds for complaint and the most substantial claim for reparations and reversal of anyone on Earth. So I'm an activist-intellectual because I think that the truth speaks for itself and I believe you should keep uncovering the truth.

The problem is that I'm not sure that this applies to a mushrooming academic industry which spawns new theories and new buzzwords at the drop of a hat. I have that kind of concern.

JKK: Yes, and in conclusion, is there anything in particular with which you would like to close?

PW: Yes, there is one thing, and this applies to all settler-colonized peoples but I want to select the one we've been talking about last, the one that is so central and at the frontier stage as we speak. The last thing I want to say is: «Viva Palestine! Long live Palestine! Palestine will be free, from the river to the sea!».

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Settler Logics and Writing Indians Out of Existence

A conversation between J. Kēhaulani Kauanui and Jean M. O'Brien[1]

Abstract

This conversation originated in a radio interview of Jean O'Brien conducted by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui on her public affairs show, «Indigenous Politics: From Native New England and Beyond» from September 21, 2010. The article is an expanded version of that interview, updated to reflect our ongoing dialogue. Kauanui invites O'Brien to lay out the central features of her newest book, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*, which is a history of settler colonial processes central to the formation of the United States. O'Brien explains how 'writing Indians out of existence' bolstered their settler project of claiming nativity for themselves and their attempts to replace Native people on their land. The dialogue also explores the contemporary implications of this historical formation. Finally, O'Brien also discusses two current projects – one regarding her forthcoming book on historical images of American Indians in children's literature, and a contemporary co-edited volume of essays on federal recognition struggles among tribal nations in the United States. The conversation concludes with a brief discussion of the current state of Native American and its relation to Indigenous Studies.

Keywords: U.S. settler colonialism; logic of elimination; American Indians; historical erasure; New England.

J. Kēhaulani Kauanui: I would like to ask how you came to be a scholar working in Native American history.

[1] This conversation has its origins in a radio interview of Jean M. O'Brien conducted by J. Kēhaulani Kauanui on her public affairs show, "Indigenous Politics: From Native New England and Beyond" from September 21, 2010. What appears here is an expanded version that is updated to reflect our ongoing dialogue.

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