

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Persistence of White Supremacy: Indigenous Women Migrants and the Structures of Settler Capitalism

Shannon Speed

ABSTRACT Since the 2016 presidential election, there has been a resurgence of openly white supremacist discourse and action in the United States. The public debate following the election often suggested that Trump and his followers represented a backlash against the assumed progress of a multicultural and potentially even postracial society. However, the assumption inherent in this perspective, that white supremacy can be voted out or voted back in, is problematic. In this article, based on ten years of research with Indigenous women migrants from Mexico and Central America, I will apply an analytic of settler colonialism in order to explore how white supremacy is structured into our institutions and everyday social relations. In particular, I will consider the intersection of capitalism and the settler state, and how the changing needs of capitalism shape discourses of race differently over time yet remain fundamentally underwritten by white supremacist assumptions. Examining the shift from neoliberal multiculturalism to what I call *neoliberal multicriminalism*, I argue that neoliberal multiculturalism, with its accompanying discourses of tolerance and rights, may have reached its limits, and that the resurgence of open white supremacy is a response to the changing needs of white settler capitalist power. [*white supremacy, patriarchy, settler colonialism, neoliberalism, migration*]

RESUMEN Desde la elección presidencial de 2016, ha habido una resurgencia del discurso y la acción de la abiertamente supremacía blanca en los Estados Unidos. El debate público tras la elección a menudo sugería que Trump y sus seguidores representaban una reacción violenta contra el progreso asumido de una sociedad multicultural y aun potencialmente postracial. Sin embargo, la asunción inherente en esta perspectiva, que la supremacía blanca puede ser no reelegida o elegida de nuevo, es problemática. En este artículo, basado en diez años de investigación con mujeres migrantes indígenas de México y América Central, aplicaré una herramienta de análisis de colonialismo de colono para explorar cómo la supremacía blanca es estructurada en nuestras instituciones y relaciones sociales cotidianas. En particular, consideraré la intersección del capitalismo y el estado de colono, y cómo las necesidades cambiantes del capitalismo le dan forma a los discursos de raza diferentemente con el tiempo, sin embargo permanecen fundamentalmente suscritos por asunciones supremacistas blancas. Examinando el cambio del multiculturalismo neoliberal a lo que llamo el *multicriminalismo* neoliberal, argumento que el multiculturalismo neoliberal, con sus discursos acompañantes de tolerancia y derechos, puede haber alcanzado sus límites, y que el

resurgimiento de la supremacía blanca abierta es una respuesta a las necesidades cambiantes del poder capitalista de colono blanco. [*supremacía blanca, patriarcado, colonialismo de colono, neoliberalismo, migración*]

Since the 2016 US presidential election, there has been a resurgence of openly white supremacist discourse and action in the United States. The key word in the preceding sentence is “openly,” not “resurgence.” Prior to Donald Trump’s election, in spite of scholars’ repeated contestations and people of color’s everyday experiences to the contrary, the idea that the United States was a postracial society enjoyed significant popularity. The public debate following the election often seemed to suggest that Trump and his followers represented a swing back or even a backlash against this assumed progress (particularly against the previous election of the country’s first Black president). However, the unexamined assumption inherent in this perspective that white supremacy can be elected out or voted back in is deeply problematic. As I argue below, the United States—indeed, power throughout the modern world since the advent of European colonialism—is founded on and structured by the interrelationship of settler colonialism and capitalism and their attendant logics of race and gender (or, more specifically, white supremacy and patriarchy). Because the United States is structured upon white supremacy, shifts in public discourse and policy, while significant, do not change the fundamental structures of power. While the forms that structural logics take over time are historically contingent, they remain as persistently present today as they were five hundred years ago.

In this article, based on ten years of research with Indigenous women migrants from Mexico and Central America, I will apply an analytic of settler colonialism to explore how white supremacy is structured into our institutions and everyday social relations, as well as into transnational processes. In particular, I will consider the intersection of capitalism and the settler state and how the changing needs of capitalism shape discourses of race differently over time, yet remain fundamentally underwritten by white supremacist assumptions. Examining the shift from neoliberal multiculturalism to what I call *neoliberal multiracialism*, I argue that the neoliberal multicultural moment, with its accompanying discourses of tolerance and rights that allowed for such notions as “postracial society” to arise, has reached its limits, and that the resurgence of open white supremacy in public discourse and action since Trump’s election is a response to the changing needs of white settler-capitalist power.

THE ENDURING RACIAL STRUCTURE OF THE SETTLER-CAPITALIST STATE

A settler-colonial analytic has rarely been applied to the study of white supremacy. In one of the few exceptions, Glenn (2015, 52) argues for “the necessity of a settler colonialism framework for an historically grounded and inclusive anal-

ysis of US race and gender formation.” I agree with Glenn that a settler-colonial framework serves to “encompass the specificities of racisms and sexism affecting different racialized groups while also highlighting structural and cultural factors that undergird and link these racisms and sexism” (52). One of the primary insights of settler-colonial theory is that some of the states formed by European colonial expansion are characterized by colonial occupation as an *enduring structure* (Wolfe 2006). The difference between settler colonialism and other kinds of colonialism is that the settlers come to stay and thus by necessity must eliminate the Indigenous population of the lands to be “settled” by invading white Europeans. Wolfe’s (1998, 2) ubiquitous statement that “settler invasion is a structure, not an event” is so often cited because it succinctly captures the enduring nature of occupation and dispossession. Further, because “indigeneity itself is enduring . . . Indigenous peoples exist, resist, and persist” (Kauanui 2016, 1), settler-colonial structures require constant maintenance in an effort to eradicate them (Wolfe 2006). Settler colonialism thus entails ongoing structural violence of dispossession and elimination.

To justify that dispossession and elimination, elaborate racial logics have been deployed, rendering the Native as nonhuman, uncivilized, and unsuited for civilization, and thus inevitably ceding to white liberal progress by disappearing (Barker 2011; Berkhofer 2011; Goeman 2013; Grande 1999; Lowe 2015; Morgensen 2010). White settler identity is premised on this foundational relationship to Indigenous people. The “uncivilized” and “savage” Native comes into existence only as the racialized Other of the “civilized” white settler. Thus, whiteness, Glenn (2015, 61) argues, “becomes synonymous with the nation.” Regarding the United States, in particular, Moreton-Robinson (2008, 85; cited in Glenn 2015, 59) ties whiteness to Native dispossession: “The USA as a White nation state cannot exist without land and clearly defined borders, it is the legally defined and asserted territorial sovereignty that provides the context for national identification of Whiteness. In this way . . . Native American dispossession indelibly marks configurations of White national identity.”

Clearly, these racial logics were fundamentally premised on white supremacy: they invoked social hierarchies in which white European men were understood as superior to all Others and thus by definition had a right to possess and control the land and the labor of Others. As Bonds and Inwood (2016, 720) frame it, these settler “imaginings valorized whiteness and sanctioned the violence of white domination, enslavement, and genocide while bolstering Eurocentric understandings of land use, private property, and wealth accumulation,” a framing that usefully foregrounds not only

white supremacy's dispossessive and eliminatory capacities but also its foundational role in the formation of capitalist modernity (see also Lowe 2015; Trouillot 2003).

The intimate relationship between colonialism, capitalism, and white supremacy is not incidental. As European colonial expansion facilitated the development and spread of capitalism, it brought white supremacy along with it. In a recent *Boston Review* essay, Robin D. G. Kelley (2017) draws out an important aspect of Cedric Robinson's work regarding how racism emerged with capitalism out of the feudal order in Europe. This co-development rendered them fundamentally one system: racial capitalism. Importantly, Kelley highlights Robinson's argument that racial capitalism was the product of a colonial process within Europe: for Robinson, "the first European proletarians were racial subjects (Irish, Jews, Roma or Gypsies, Slavs, etc.) and they were victims of dispossession (enclosure), colonialism, and slavery within Europe. Indeed, Robinson suggested that racialization within Europe was very much a colonial process involving invasion, settlement, expropriation, and racial hierarchy" (paragraph 5).

Understood in this way, the relationship between European colonization, capitalism, and racialization is foundational and co-constitutive. Settler-colonial capitalism necessitates the eradication of Indigenous populations, "the seizure and privatization of their lands, and the exploitation of marginalized peoples in a system of capitalism established by and reinforced through racism" (Bonds and Inwood 2016, 716). Coulthard (2014) has highlighted the continuity of the ongoing relationship between settler colonialism and capitalism in his theorization of primitive accumulation. Coulthard argues that primitive accumulation (the process in which the producer is divorced from the means of production), rather than being the historical point of departure for capitalism or the "pre-history of capital," as Marx theorized, is instead an ongoing process, deeply imbricated in the violence of capitalism's continuing dispossession of land and resources.¹ Following Coulthard, Brown (2014, 4; emphasis in original) emphasizes the "points of intersection between primitive accumulation and settler colonialism as *ongoing processes*" in what he terms "settler accumulation." Because settler-capitalist dispossession is ongoing, white-supremacist-based racialization is as well. The racial logics that underpin Native dispossession, slavery, and successive waves of capitalist labor exploitation are structuring logics, inherent to the settler-capitalist state.

These racial logics are not static but rather have been molded and applied to Indigenous people in different forms over time, alternatively justifying genocidal violence, removal, assimilation, termination, and relocation, all policies designed to eliminate, either through direct killing, physical removal, or biocultural assimilation.² The same white supremacist logics have been extended to successive waves of "arrivants," to use Byrd's (2011) term, who were necessary for labor but were understood to similarly put at risk the privileged place of whiteness in the settler state.³ As Indige-

nous people were constructed as savage and uncivilized for the purposes of dispossessing them through colonial enclosure, African and Asian arrivants were constructed as "slave" and "coolie" in forced-labor systems of enslavement and indenture,⁴ and various Others were subject to racialized constructions in successive coercive or exploitative labor regimes. Xenophobic white supremacy in the United States is thus intimately tied to settler structures, differing over time and among differently racialized "exogenous others" in relation to evolving labor regimes of capitalism (Glenn 2015). These various racializations are distinct iterations of a common dynamic: settler-capitalist societies are premised on maintaining white dominance over Indigenous people and asserting state sovereignty against the incursion of people deemed "Other" and generating them as populations to meet the labor needs of capitalism. Such racialization takes shape in the current moment in the production of the terrorist/criminal immigrant who must be detained, deported, or rendered deportable. Each of these constructions has served a particular moment of capital expansion, and each leaves its ideological imprint in racial and gender formations that continue to mark contemporary political subjectivities. While the construction of immigrants as terrorists, rapists, "bad hombres," and bad parents has been most virulent in the Trump administration, underpinning policies of racialized exclusion, such as the Muslim ban, family separation, and maniacal pursuit of the border wall, it is in fact an extreme extension of the logics already at play under previous administrations while the discourse of the United States as postracial flourished.

INDIGENOUS WOMEN MIGRANTS AND THE SETTLER-CAPITALIST STATE

It is well known that the Obama administration deported more immigrants than any prior administration, prompting immigration advocates to dub the president "deporter-in-chief" and decry the administration's "five-year deportation spree."⁵ In total, more than 2.5 million people were deported during the Obama administration.⁶ President Obama justified the high level of deportations by arguing that those deported were criminals. In 2014, Obama's memo on priorities for immigration enforcement emphasized this criminality: "We're going to keep focusing enforcement resources on actual threats to our security. Felons, not families. Criminals, not children. Gang members, not a mom who's working hard to provide for her kids."⁷ Nevertheless, the reality is that between 2009 and 2017, half of those deported had committed no crime at all, and 60 percent of those that did had only victimless crimes (mostly immigration violations).⁸ The vast majority (approximately 95 percent) of those deported in any given year were from Mexico and Central America.⁹ In the racialization of Brown bodies as dangerous criminals, President Obama continued down the path opened by his predecessor George W. Bush. Following the events of September 11, the Bush administration set in motion a series of actions that cast immigrants as criminals and

terrorists. In 2003, the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) was dissolved and reformulated as Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the mission of which is defined in the Homeland Security Act as “preventing terrorist acts in the United States [and] reducing the vulnerability of the United States to terrorism.”¹⁰ In 2005, the DHS began its Secure Border Initiative (SBI), which has as its stated goal “improving public safety by working to better identify, detain and ultimately remove dangerous criminal aliens from your community.”¹¹ These shifts clearly constructed immigrants as terrorists and criminals. The construction was applied specifically to women and children refugees. It was under the Obama administration that ICE first began arguing that women and children refugees should not be freed from detention while their asylum claims were processed because they represented a “risk to our national security.”¹²

In a rather high-profile manner, Trump has racialized Central American and Mexican women and children fleeing violence as criminals and terrorists, even taking this as far as declaring their presence on the border a national emergency.¹³ While numbers are difficult to obtain because the US government does not record Indigenous identity, only national origin, many of these migrants are Indigenous and are not strangers to settler-state racialization. This state interpolation effectively strips them of their Indigeneity while constructing them as political subjects as terrorist/criminal threats. Many of the stories I gathered from Indigenous women migrants from Mexico and Central America reflect these multilayered and ongoing racialization processes. These women are multiply subject to power through their race and gender in their homes in Mexico and Central America, on their journeys to the United States, and in the United States once they have crossed the border; their stories illustrate the permanence of colonialism, the impacts of shifting forms of capitalism, and the persistence of white supremacy and patriarchy.

I met Floricarmen in the T. Don Hutto Residential Center, an immigration detention center in central Texas in 2013. I had entered the facility as part of the Hutto Visitation Program (HVP), a project of the organization Grassroots Leadership in Austin, Texas. The goal of the program was to visit women inside, accompanying them during their often-prolonged detention periods, and monitoring human rights conditions at the infamous facility.¹⁴ Floricarmen had been in the United States for fourteen years when she was detained. She had come to the United States after many others in her southern Mexico town had departed as their local subsistence economy shriveled under the changes wrought by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Implemented in 1994, NAFTA promised to make Mexico the poster child of neoliberal globalization. Instead, the trade agreement gave rise to the forceful opposition of the Indigenous Zapatista uprising. Still, in spite of that opposition, the agreement undermined subsistence and small-scale economies by imposing a neoliberal market logic on what were fundamentally

unequal economies in terms of production and distribution (Bacon 2008; Sealing 2003; Wise 2009). This was the neoliberal moment, Fukuyama’s “end of history,” in which ostensibly free-market economies marched across the globe, accompanied by rights regimes and democracy. While this was in a sense a settler-capitalist fantasy to begin with, there was arguably a neoliberal multicultural moment in Latin America in which democratization and rights recognition seemed to move in tandem with the spread of neoliberalism. As states undertook an often massive reorientation of their economies (Mexico is particularly notable), ending land reform, eliminating state subsidies for farming and industry, privatizing capital and natural resources, limiting tariffs on foreign goods, and slashing government social welfare programs, they also moved toward popularly elected governments and expanded notions of human rights and the rule of law. A number of states, including Mexico and Guatemala, reformed their constitutions to recognize Indigenous peoples and extend to them some level of collective Indigenous rights (Sieder 2002; Van Cott 2000; Yasher 1999). Often posited as the inevitable spread of neoliberal democracy on a US model (at times with an evolutionist flavor of development toward the highest state of being, naturally epitomized by the United States), these processes seemed to promise at least a minimal increase in political stability, rights, and accountability. This was the moment Charles Hale (2002, 2005) critically referred to as neoliberal multiculturalism.¹⁵

The fallacy of neoliberal multiculturalism’s promise of equal rights and economic trickle down are evident in Floricarmen’s story, as is the continuity of racial and gendered structures. As Floricarmen’s migration suggests, the real benefits of those rights gains were meaningless for many Indigenous people in Mexico, who found themselves forced to undertake difficult journeys only to spend the next decade and a half living shadow lives as undocumented workers (by definition, outside the scope of liberal rights) and always at risk of being cast eventually into the United States’ detention and deportation regime. The flip side of dispossession and expulsion from their homeland, coupled with racialization and criminalization as they cross into the United States, is their incorporation into a workforce as depoliticized, subordinate, disposable subjects in the service of neoliberal capitalism. As Floricarmen’s migration reflects, the real beneficiaries of these economic and political shifts were never intended to be Indigenous peoples. Even as they were discursively written into the state, Indigenous people were economically disenfranchised to an extent that they had not been since before the Mexican Revolution. Their agricultural and subsistence lifeways were consciously decimated by the settler elites in power, so much so that the Indigenous Zapatista uprising, launched on the eve of NAFTA, characterized the changes as a “death sentence for Indigenous peoples.” The settler racial logics of the uncivilized Indian finally ceding to the progress of civilization and modernity were ever present, even as Indigenous people were acknowledged as rights-bearing individuals in the nation-state (which

again signaled their entry into modernity.) The superiority of white capitalist modernity over Indigenous backwardness had never been more potently asserted. White supremacy was lurking in plain sight in the neoliberal multicultural era in Mexico.

More than a decade after Floricarmen left her home in southern Mexico, Nadania departed her home on Honduras's north coast. Nadania had witnessed a murder on a bus, carried out by local gangs linked to drug cartels, who she referred to simply as "the men who run the town." A short time later, her small store at the front of her home was shot at. She fled the next day, certain she would be killed if she stayed. Leaving Honduras did not free her from danger, as she was held for ransom by cartel gangs in northern Mexico and later was detained for over a year in immigration detention in the United States.

Nadania's experiences of cartel-related violence reflect the shifting dynamics in Mexico and Central America in which the neoliberal multicultural moment of Floricarmen's story, even with the limitations to its promise, quickly faded into obscurity as the deregulation of the end of corporatism and the unleashing of free-market logics, in the absence of solid legal and political systems, led quickly to the growth of mass-scale illegal markets. Drug, arms, and human trafficking expanded as the cartels flourished in Mexico, feeding on the widespread corruption of the government and military and the deregulated money flows and reserve army of newly impoverished generated by neoliberalism (Campbell 2009; Paley 2014). In Guatemala, the exclusionary state constructed by "predatory economic and military elites" (Gavigan 2011, 99) and a culture of violence that followed the thirty-year civil war that left two hundred thousand dead, the majority Mayan, created fertile ground for the spread of the cartels as the US-backed drug war in Mexico got underway (Briscoe and Rodríguez Pellecer 2010). In Honduras, the power vacuum produced by the US-supported 2009 coup and its aftermath, which included massive repression against protestors, opened the door for the expansion of illegal drug activity and the consolidation of power by cartel gangs and street gangs (Loperena 2017). Increasingly, authoritarian and militarized governance became the norm in this new national-security era. The denationalization of resources and invitation of foreign capital fostered megadevelopment projects ranging from extraction to tourism, which disproportionately affected Black and Indigenous communities seeking autonomy and territorial control (Loperena 2016). Thus, transnational capital expresses in these current iterations the logics of white settler appropriation. Meanwhile, dissent has been increasingly criminalized, and there has been a rise in paramilitary violence to quash resistance, usually linked both to the government and to cartel powers controlling the areas. Highlighting the role of racialization in this process, Birss (2017) notes, "This neocolonialism relies on racist attitudes against Indigenous and other tribal peoples, providing governments and companies with an excuse to behave as though the resources they

encounter belong to them, regardless of the inhabitants of the area or the social and environmental consequences."¹⁶ While Birss refers to this dynamic as "neocolonial," Yagenaova and Garcia (2009, 158) suggest that there is nothing new about it: "the racist and ethnocentric nature of the state and its links with capital [in Guatemala are] part of a long history of dispossession and occupation." In short, this web of neoliberal illegality, with settler states fully enmeshed, generates new forms of dispossession and exploitation as well as swelling violence rates, making Honduras the murder capital of the world,¹⁷ while Guatemala has one of the highest rates of femicide,¹⁸ and Mexico grapples with violence so extreme it has been deemed a "crisis of civilization," with at least 250,000 dead and, by official reports, 37,400 disappeared in recent years (2018 alone had more than 33,000 homicides).¹⁹ In this context, "rights rang hollow" (Hale, Calla, and Mullings 2017, 87), and the rights struggles and Indigenous-autonomy claims of neoliberal multiculturalism waned in the face of obscene levels of bloodshed and massive impunity. This was neoliberal multicriminalism, and Nadania experienced the violence generated by it at home and on her journey north (Speed 2016).

In her analysis of what she terms "neoliberal settler colonialism" in Canada, Jen Preston (2014) suggests that we should pay attention to the ways "white settler colonialism functions through complex relationships between the state, its national security forces, and private . . . companies" because to do so "reveals how racism and settler colonialism fundamentally structure contemporary social and economic life." Preston's analysis usefully brings settler colonialism and capitalism into dialogue and foregrounds the role of white supremacy. Here, I want to turn Preston's analysis slightly on its head, considering not how white supremacy structures economic life but rather how the evolving economic structure generates permutations in the ever-present frame of white supremacy. In Latin America, the onset of neoliberalism necessitated fundamental shifts in the ways that states related to their populations. Free-market extremes could not be facilitated either by authoritarian control or by corporatist control, the two main models of governance in the region. Governments needed more democratic structures for the contradictions of social inequality (inevitably produced by capitalism) to be mediated by civil society (hence the concurrent rise of NGOs, as I have argued elsewhere [Speed 2008]). For this type of governance to function, society needed to be composed of rights-bearing individuals, leading to the wave of constitutional reforms and rights recognition in the early 1990s. Racial regimes shifted, and Indigenous people became a positive for the nation rather than a problem, at least nominally and often folklorically.

While this kind of process was underway for most of the 1990s, in Mexico and Central America, it did not achieve democratic consolidation. In the absence of checks and balances and independently functioning judiciaries, populations, particularly the most vulnerable, were left simultaneously exposed to predatory foreign capital and predacious

illegal economies that operated outside the realm of any regulation and inside the realm of ostensibly legitimate government. Authoritarianism resurged, and, not surprisingly, the state increasingly racialized Indigenous people as criminals and terrorists in the context of escalating violence. Nadania's experience in Honduras reflects the harsh social realities of neoliberal multicriminalism, in which the racialization of Indigenous people underlies both new forms of economic dispossession and the violent response by the settler state to any contestation of it.

Nadania, like all of the women in my research, left her home and came to the United States seeking a safe and stable environment. At the time these women entered the United States, neoliberal multiculturalism still reigned. Yet, I want to suggest that their stories of detention and deportation pointed even then to the fissures. Capitalism had expanded globally—there was nowhere left to go—and the inherent contradictions it produces, most readily visible in ever-increasing inequality, were becoming more apparent in popular discontent. The United States' inability to grapple with immigration is in part a product of these contradictions: capitalism requires the labor of the disposable migrant population, yet the presence of these racialized Others challenges white settler sovereignty and privilege. This was reflected in the massive contradictions in the Obama administration's detention and deportation policies, so incongruous with his presidency and his generally neoliberal approach to governance, in which the free-market economy stood, global economic cooperation was emphasized, and individual civil rights were foregrounded. In some sense, we might say that immigration detention and deportation were the canaries in the coal mine, signaling the impending political crisis of multiculturalist policies that would come to fruition in the US presidential campaign and election of 2016.

I met Hilaria in an immigrant shelter in Austin, Texas, after her release from the Karnes County Residential Center, a family detention facility in central Texas. From San Marcos, Guatemala, the Maya Mam woman had come to the United States with her young son, fleeing domestic violence. She entered the United States in Texas, part of a wave of refugee families that flowed into the country in the summer and fall of 2015, generating xenophobic fears in a context already structured on racialized understandings of good and bad immigrants. Like many others, they were cast into one of the prison-like facilities designated to incarcerate the women and children, and there they remained for eleven months.²⁰ Hilaria's asylum claim was denied, but a new case was opened on behalf of her son. When Hilaria participated in the hunger strikes organized by women in the facilities to protest the lack of health care, deplorable conditions, sexual harassment, and unconscionably long incarceration, the private prison corporations first retaliated, putting her in medical isolation. But eventually, in the face of a public advocacy campaign and significant bad press surrounding the strike, ICE did a mass release of the families in Karnes. At the immigrant shelter, Hilaria struggled to manage the huge monitoring device

shackled to her ankle and sought work to sustain herself as she nervously awaited the outcome of Elan's case. Less than a year later, asylum was denied, and she was informed that they were now deportable. Terrified and unwilling to return to Guatemala, Hilaria sought help. The following month, she went into sanctuary in a nearby church. She and Elan would spend the next year inside the church as a political battle was waged by immigration advocates and faith-based activists to gain deferred-action status for the two. In a short-lived victory, in October 2016, Hilaria and Elan were granted deferred action and left the church, poised to start a new life after spending much of the preceding three years in confinement. Two weeks later, Donald Trump was elected. Fearing the revocation of their deferred status, Hilaria and Elan returned to the church.²¹

Hilaria's experience is indicative of the fact that white supremacist logics were present as policy long before Trump's election, in the heart of neoliberal multiculturalism's "postracial" moment of the Obama presidency. The racialization of Brown bodies as criminal, and thus excludable, gave rise to the most massive detention and deportation numbers this country has ever seen. This racialization was exerted with particular patriarchal force on women and children refugees, a dynamic Hilaria and Elan experienced through prolonged detention in Karnes and the punitive isolation Hilaria was subjected to for having the audacity to protest. Notably, Hilaria's experience also shows that the sanctuary movement that seemed to spring up out of nowhere following the rise of overt xenophobic rhetoric and the threat to DACA and immigrants in general under Trump was, in fact, already underway as a response to Obama's policies.

But if immigration policy under Obama signaled the tensions arising within neoliberal multiculturalism, Donald Trump's election signaled the end of the US multiculturalist period. Assertions about a postracial society will be much harder to sell in the future. Often, public commentary in the media has focused on the fact that Trump's ascent to power and the attendant resurgence of overt white supremacy was brought about in part by white people who are angry and fearful of the gains of nonwhites in the neoliberal multicultural period. However, the contradictions of capitalist expansion are also crucial to the resurgence of open white supremacy. The neoliberal expansion—what has often been referred to as globalization—with its extreme free-market logics, has generated a disenfranchised population frustrated with the disappearance of working-class—and even middle-class—prosperity and well-being. Earlier forms of laissez-faire capitalism took into account the need for states to mediate social inequality. Neoliberalism, the extreme version of free-market capitalism, shuns state intervention, leaving social inequality to the play of market forces. In the United States as in Latin America, this has led to previously unseen levels of social and economic inequality. During the Obama administration, even as unemployment dropped and the economy grew, people struggled to stay afloat, and

people who had expected to live middle-class lives descended further and further into poverty (whether it was defined as such by decreasing federal standards or not). It was, in part, that anger that fueled Trump's election, which embraced the idea that it was globalization (in the form of free-trade agreements, outsourcing of jobs, etc.) that had brought them to this place. The embrace of Trump's assertion that he would "bring the jobs back," however untenable that claim was to anyone with even a shallow understanding of how capitalism works, nevertheless reflects the underlying contradictions of capitalism at play in the political moment. It is in that moment that Euro-Americans felt the need to reassert their settler right to possess this land and reap the profits of economic exploitation in this country.

CONCLUSIONS ON THE ENDURANCE OF WHITE SUPREMACY

In this article, I departed from the oral histories of Indigenous women migrants and applied a settler-colonial analytic to examine the intersection of capitalism and the settler state to understand the enduring nature of white supremacy as an enduring logic of settler-capitalist power. Indigenous women migrants' stories illustrate larger processes at work than just a US election or even a "state of mind" of the US population. They reflect the ongoing and enduring structures of settler colonialism, which, I have argued, is fundamentally premised on Native dispossession and white supremacy. As capitalism evolves, new racialized rationales must be provided, and old tropes are revived in new guises. In the latest phase of capitalism—neoliberalism—multiculturalism was the racial ideology, always promising inclusion and rights for those sufficiently or properly invested in the system (which for Indigenous people meant accepting the settler state as the sovereign power that could grant them rights). Neoliberal multiculturalism expanded from the United States across much of the globe, and the contradictions produced in that expansion are being felt in social tensions in the United States, as in Mexico and Central America. Overt expressions of white supremacy and misogyny—always structurally present but discursively muted at a particular moment in time to facilitate a particular kind of capitalist expansion (neoliberal multiculturalism)—are being deployed in new and more explicit ways to address capitalism's crisis. The modified "friendlier" forms of racial social relations associated with the multiculturalist moment have been too easily understood as progress toward elimination rather than as new iterations that would be recalibrated as the structural needs of settler-capitalist power changed. Further, while the racial logics in this new phase are not the same iterations as those deployed against settler-capitalist Others in distinct moments of history and across distinct geographies, they are nonetheless logics of white supremacy, mobilized to justify ongoing Euro-American "rightful" occupation and continued subjugation of nonwhite Others.

In studying contemporary state power, a settler analytic brings a fundamental insight that other theories of the state

ignore: that the modern state is structured upon the ongoing settlement and dispossession of the original population on the related territory. That structure entails racial and gender hierarchies that do the work of justifying this occupation, as well as the inequalities inherent to the capitalist system. Why is it important to understand white supremacy and patriarchy as inherent and ongoing structural logics of the settler-capitalist state? In terms of the possibilities for liberation, it means that policy measures, rights struggles, and legal battles get us only so far in shifting the structures of power that oppress and that we only gain ground when it is convenient/possible within the current mode of capitalism. Ending racial and gender oppression will mean real decolonization: the creation of societies not structured on Native dispossession and capitalist exploitation. Decolonization is the only way to eliminate the racial and gendered logics that intersect inevitably to generate conditions of oppression and violence for Indigenous women, and for us all.

Shannon Speed *Departments of Anthropology and Gender Studies, University of California, Los Angeles, CA 90095; speed@aisc.ucla.edu*

NOTES

Acknowledgments. Chokma'shki/Thank you to Aisha Beliso-De Jesus and Jemima Pierre for including me in this important special issue. Their work, as always, inspires me. I am also grateful to the anonymous readers at *American Anthropologist* and Editor-in-Chief Deborah Thomas for excellent comments that greatly improved the article. The research on which this article is based was funded in part by a Faculty Research Grant from the Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies at the University of Texas at Austin. As always, my strongest gratitude is to the women who shared their stories with me.

1. For a review of the recent literature rethinking primitive accumulation, see Nichols (2015).
2. These are distinct but interrelated and often overlapping approaches to Native dispossession and elimination. By "genocide," I refer to the open attempt to eliminate the Native population through violence, though the others can also be understood as genocidal in their attempt to eliminate Natives through other means. "Removal" refers to the period in the 1930s when, facilitated by the 1930 Indian Removal Act, five southeastern tribes—the Chickasaw, Choctaw, Cherokee, Creek, and Seminole—were forced to move from their homelands to areas west of the Mississippi River, into Indian Territory (now the state of Oklahoma). "Assimilation" refers to a period of more than a century beginning in the late 1800s when a variety of overt attempts were made to eliminate Natives by assimilating them into white society. These included the removal of Indian children to boarding schools and for adoption into white families, and the related forced elimination of language. "Termination" refers to the period from the late 1940s to the late 1960s when the US government attempted a final solution of accelerated assimila-

tion. This included the Indian Termination Act of 1953, which summarily terminated recognition of more than one hundred tribes, including all tribes in the states of California, Florida, New York, and Texas. Termination was linked to the program of “relocation,” which fostered and facilitated Native people’s relocation from reservation and tribal areas to cities, where they were supposed to find employment and blend into the larger society, which was intended to facilitate assimilation and break up community and family ties.

3. In *Transits of Empire*, Byrd (2011, xxii) argues that “racialization and colonization have worked simultaneously to other and abject entire peoples so they can be enslaved, excluded, removed, and killed in the name of progress and capitalism.” She uses the term “arrivant” to distinguish racially subjugated non-Indigenous people inhabiting Indigenous lands from white settlers due to their distinct location in the power formations of the settler-capitalist state.
4. I do not mean to conflate these two systems of forced labor. Chattel slavery is fundamentally distinct from other forms of forced labor in its reduction of humans to commodities owned and sold as private property and entailed particular forms of racialization and dehumanization. My point is simply that all of these forms of racialization are based in white supremacy and emerge from the changing needs of the settler-capitalist state. In different periods and geographic locations, Indigenous people have been subjected to both of these forms of unfree labor.
5. “Why Has President Obama Deported More Immigrants Than Any President in US History? Since 9/11, Immigration Has Become Increasingly Tangled with Criminal Enforcement and National Security.” *The Nation*. <https://www.thenation.com/article/why-has-president-obama-deported-more-immigrants-any-president-us-history/>.
6. Actually, as of 2015, more than 2.5 million undocumented persons had been deported by immigration authorities since President Obama took office in 2009, a total that exceeded that of the two terms of his predecessor, George W. Bush, in which just over two million people were deported. An additional 450,000 were deported in 2016, bringing the Obama administration’s total close to three million. See: <https://www.dhs.gov/immigration-statistics/enforcement-priorities>.
7. White House Office of the Press Secretary. 2014. “Remarks by the President in Address to the Nation on Immigration.” <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2014/11/20/remarks-president-address-nation-immigration>.
8. David Bier. 2018. “60% of Deported ‘Criminal Aliens’ Committed Only Victimless Crime.” Cato Institute, June 6. <https://www.cato.org/blog/60-deported-criminal-aliens-committed-only-victimless-crimes-few-violent-crimes>.
9. Removal statistics by year are available at: <https://www.ice.gov/removal-statistics/>. For an analysis of 2012 and 2013, see: <https://trac.syr.edu/immigration/reports/350/>.
10. Homeland Security Act (2002). Available at: http://www.dhs.gov/xabout/laws/law_regulation_rule_0011.shtm.
11. Immigration Control and Enforcement (ICE) Secure Communities website. <http://www.ice.gov/doclib/secure-communities/pdf/sc-brochure.pdf>.
12. ICE bond hearing documentation packet, in possession of the author.
13. In just a few examples: “President Trump Calls Caravan Immigrants ‘Stone Cold Criminals.’ Here’s What We Know.” *USA Today*, November 26, 2018. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/2018/11/26/president-trump-migrant-caravan-criminals/2112846002/>; “Are Donald Trump’s Claims about the Caravan of 7,000 Migrants Accurate? The President Has Made Several False and Misleading Claims about the Central American Migrants Travelling to the US Border.” *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2018/oct/22/fact-check-trumps-claims-migrant-caravan>; “Trump: Migrant Caravan ‘Is an Invasion.’” *The Hill*. October 29, 2018. <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/413624-trump-calls-migrant-caravan-an-invasion>.
14. The T. Don Hutto Residential Center is a former medium-security prison converted to a “residential facility” for the detention of immigrant families in 2006. Conditions at the prison during its period as a family detention center included compelling children to wear prison uniforms, keeping families in their cells twelve hours a day, threatening children with separation from their parents, and failing to provide adequate nutrition and medical care. It was an infamous symbol of expanded immigration policing, detention, and deportation in the United States following the September 11 attacks. Following extensive grassroots advocacy by a coalition of immigrant-rights and faith-based activists called Texans United for Families (TUFF), the ACLU and faculty from the University of Texas Law School sued ICE and the Department of Homeland Security on behalf of twenty-six immigrant children detained with their parents at the center. The resulting settlement ended family detention at T. Don Hutto, and when I began working with the HVP, the facility housed only women. However, there were multiple reports of abuse in the facility, which has been the subject of two federal sexual abuse investigations. In 2011, a former guard pled guilty to federal charges of sexually assaulting detained women. “Sexual Abuse of Female Detainees at Hutto Highlights Ongoing Failure of Immigration Detention System, Says ACLU.” See: <https://www.aclu.org/news/sexual-abuse-female-detainees-hutto-highlights-ongoing-failure-immigration-detention-system>; “CCA Guard Accused of 8 Sexual Assaults.” *Courthouse News Service*, April 15, 2015. <https://www.courthousenews.com/cca-guard-accused-of-8-sexual-assaults/>.
15. The US model emerged two decades earlier, also in relation to the shifting needs of capitalism. As the post–World War II economic boom reached its limits and a complex inflationary spiral loomed and wage stagnation grew, the United States moved toward post-Fordist production modes and ceded Keynesian demand-side economics in favor of Milton Friedman’s University of Chicago supply-side model. President Ronald Reagan embraced this model’s “trickle-down” logic: that the government needed to cut taxes and limit social spending, and the

resulting wealth would trickle down to the masses. The new emphasis on shrinking government, of course, melded with civil rights demands coming out of the 1960s and 1970s, as the government shifted responsibility for managing social inequality to individual citizens (see Harvey 2007).

16. As Birss (2017, 316) points out, the United States is no exception, as reflected in the violent repression and criminalization of protesters of the Dakota Access Pipeline on the territory of the Standing Rock Sioux.
17. "Map: Here Are Countries with the World's Highest Murder Rates." *The World*, June 27, 2016. <https://www.pri.org/stories/2016-06-27/map-here-are-countries-worlds-highest-murder-rates>; "Honduras Is Still the Murder Capital of the World: Decapitations and Mutilations Are on the Rise Even as the Overall Murder Rate Declines." *Time*, February 17, 2014. world.time.com/2014/02/17/honduras-is-still-the-murder-capital-of-the-world/.
18. "Guatemala: Region's Highest Rate of Femicide." Latin America Bureau, 2013. <https://lab.org.uk/guatemala-regions-highest-rate-of-femicide/>.
19. "It's a Crisis of Civilization in Mexico." *Wall Street Journal*, November 14, 2018. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/its-a-crisis-of-civilization-in-mexico-250-000-dead-37-400-missing-1542213374>.
20. The Karnes County Residential Center is located in Karnes, Texas. It was designated as a family facility when the Obama administration reinitiated family detention in 2014. There are currently two other family detention facilities: the Berks Family Residential Center in Berks County, Pennsylvania, and the South Texas Family Residential Center in Dilley, Texas. Prior to 2014, the Obama administration had ended large-scale family detention in Texas, leaving the Berks facility as the only one housing families. A fourth facility, the Artesia Family Residential Center, in New Mexico, was opened and closed amid numerous complaints of rights violations in 2014.
21. Deferred action is a discretionary, limited immigration benefit by DHS. Because it is discretionary, it can be revoked at any time.

REFERENCES CITED

- Bacon, David. 2008. "Displaced People: NAFTA's Most Important Product." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 41 (5): 23–27.
- Barker, Joanne. 2011. *Native Acts: Law, Recognition, and Cultural Authenticity*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Berkhofer, Robert F., Jr. 2011. *Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Vintage Books.
- Birss, Moira. 2017. "Criminalizing Environmental Activism." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 49 (3): 315–22.
- Bonds, Anne, and Joshua Inwood. 2016. "Beyond White Privilege: Geographies of White Supremacy and Settler Colonialism." *Progress in Human Geography* 40 (6): 715–33.
- Briscoe, Ivan, and Martín Rodríguez Pellecer. 2010. *A State under Siege: Elites, Criminal Networks, and Institutional Reform in Guatemala*. The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Relations.
- Brown, Nicholas A. 2014. "The Logic of Settler Accumulation in a Landscape of Perpetual Vanishing." *Settler Colonial Studies* 4 (1): 1–26.
- Byrd, Jody. 2011. *Transits of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Campbell, Howard. 2009. *Drug War Zone: Frontline Dispatches from the Streets of El Paso and Juarez*. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Coulthard, Glen. 2014. *Red Skin/White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Gavigan, Patrick. 2011. "Organized Crime, Illicit Power, and Threatened Peace Process: The Case of Guatemala." In *Peace Operations and Organized Crime: Enemies of Allies?*, edited by James Cockayne and Adam Cupel, 99–115. New York: Routledge.
- Glenn, Evelyn Nakano. 2015. "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of US Race and Gender Formation." *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1 (1): 52–72.
- Goeman, Mishuana. 2013. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping out Nations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Grande, Sandy. 1999. "Beyond the Ecologically Noble Savage: Deconstructing the White Man's Indian." *Environmental Ethics* 21:307–20.
- Hale, Charles R. 2002. "Does Multiculturalism Menace? Governance, Cultural Rights and the Politics of Identity in Guatemala." *Journal of Latin American Studies* 34 (3): 485–524.
- Hale, Charles R. 2005. "Neoliberal Multiculturalism: The Remaking of Cultural Rights and Racial Dominance in Central America." *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 28 (1): 10–28.
- Hale, Charles R., Pamela Calla, and Leith Mullings. 2017. "Race Matters in Dangerous Times." *NACLA Report on the Americas* 49 (1): 81–89.
- Harvey, David. 2007. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kauanui, J. Kēhaulani. 2016. "'A Structure, Not an Event': Settler Colonialism and Enduring Indigeneity." *Lateral* 5 (1): n.p.
- Kelley, Robin D. G. 2017. "What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?" *Boston Review: A Political and Literary Forum*, January 12. <http://bostonreview.net/race/robin-d-g-kelley-what-did-cedric-robinson-mean-racial-capitalism>.
- Loperena, Christopher A. 2016. "Conservation by Racialized Dispossession: The Making of an Eco-Destination on Honduras's North Coast." *Geoforum* 69:184–93.
- Loperena, Christopher A. 2017. "Settler Violence? Race and Emergent Frontiers of Progress in Honduras." *American Quarterly* 69 (4): 801–7.
- Lowe, Lisa. 2015. *The Intimacies of Four Continents*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Moreton-Robinson, Aileen. 2008. "Writing Off Treaties: White Possessions in the United States Critical Whiteness Studies Literature." In *Transnational Whiteness Matters*, edited by A. Moreton-Robinson, M. Casey, and F. Nicoll, 81–98. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Morgensen, Scott Lauria. 2010. "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16 (1–2): 105–31.

- Nichols, Robert. 2015. "Disaggregating Primitive Accumulation" *Radical Philosophy* 194 (Nov./Dec.): 18–28.
- Paley, Dawn. 2014. *Drug War Capitalism*. Chico, CA: AK Press.
- Preston, Jen. 2014. "Neoliberal Settler Colonialism, Canada and the Tar Sands." *Race and Class* 52 (2): 42–59.
- Sealing, Keith. 2003. "Indigenous Peoples, Indigenous Farmers: NAFTA's Threat to Mexican Teosinte Farmers and What Can Be Done about It." *American University International Law Review* 18:1383–98.
- Sieder, Rachel. 2002. "Recognizing Indigenous Law and the Politics of State Formation in Meso-America." In *Multiculturalism in Latin America: Indigenous Rights, Diversity and Democracy*, edited by Rachel Sieder, 184–207. New York: Palgrave.
- Speed, Shannon. 2008. *Rights in Rebellion: Indigenous Struggle and Human Rights in Chiapas*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Speed, Shannon. 2016. "States of Violence: Indigenous Women Migrants in the Era of Neoliberal Multicriminalism." *Critique of Anthropology* 36 (3): 280–301.
- Trouillot, Michel-Rolph. 2003. *Global Transformations: Anthropology and the Modern World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Van Cott, Donna Lee. 2000. *The Friendly Liquidation of the Past: The Politics of Diversity in Latin America*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.
- Wise, Timothy. 2009. "Agricultural Dumping under NAFTA: Estimating the Costs of US Agricultural Policies to Mexican Producers." *AgEcon: Research in Agricultural and Applied Economics*: 1–39. <https://ageconsearch.umn.edu/record/179078/>.
- Wolfe, Patrick. 1998. *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnography Event*. London: Continuum Press.
- Wolfe, Patrick. 2006. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 (4): 387–409.
- Yagenova, Simona V., and Rocío Garcia. 2009. "Indigenous People's Struggles against Transnational Mining Companies in Guatemala: The Sipakapa People vs. GoldCorp Mining Company." *Socialism and Democracy* 23 (3): 157–66.
- Yasher, Deborah. 1999. "Democracy, Indigenous Movements, and Postliberal Challenge in Latin America." *World Politics* 52 (1): 76–104.