

Transnational Decolonization Is the Solution, Not Movements such as Bernie Sanders' & the Women's March

Mohamed Jean Veneuse

2019

Contents

Thesis-Argument:	3
Settlers in capitalist nation-states, not hyphenated citizen-subjects	3
Decolonization and Re-Indigenization	6
On Solidarity & Ally-ship	10
Conclusion	13

Acknowledgments: Eternal thanks to Krista D'Amour Flute, Maysam Ghani, Laith Marouf, Aragorn!, Joaquin Cienfuegos, Deepa Rajkumar, and Robert Lovelace for their insightful feedback.

Thesis-Argument:

Let's be clear: figures valorized by the contemporary Left such as Alexandra Ocasio Cortez and Bernie Sanders and movements such as the Women's March are not decolonial. Their strategies – voting, reforming laws, protests for equality, and a national assimilationist politics of citizen rights – evoke two central pillars of representative-democracy: (neo)liberal humanism and multicultural identity politics. As numerous radical Indigenous, Black, Jewish, Christian, Buddhist, Sikh, as well as a minority Arab and Muslim knowledge keepers and movement organizers have argued, these human rights paradigms and identitarian reference points structurally and symbolically humanize white bodies and dehumanize the bodies of people of color (POC), and relying on approaches based on these colonial/imperial ideals ultimately, although perhaps not intentionally, re-entrenches Euro-American white ascendance and individualism.

In contrast, decolonization operates from the premise that representative democracy, which is ultimately anchored in capitalist-state structures, is a neocolonial product of modernity. It is an extension of an ongoing Euro-American neoimperialist project that we all ceaselessly subordinate ourselves to in the East and the West. Thus, decolonial strategies are not focused on the seizure of the nation-state, with the aim of enacting change from within. Decolonial approaches do not strategically invest in the reform of Western nation-state laws that evict POC. Rather, decolonization recognizes that in a neoliberal age, there is no separation between capitalism and nation-states and there is a direct relationship between settler-colonial societies (such as the US/Canada) and franchise or so-called postcolonial societies such as Egypt, neither of which have undergone decolonization. I write this analysis in an attempt to hold all of us accountable, including my own diasporic Muslim POC communities in settler-colonial societies such as the U.S./Canada.

Settlers in capitalist nation-states, not hyphenated citizen-subjects

Movements such as the Women's March and Bernie Sanders' are based on several flawed assumptions: 1) that nation-states can be disentangled from capitalism; 2) that fascism is the same as totalitarianism. First, it is a historical fact that capitalism and the nation-state evolved symbiotically. Although they can become disjointed over the short-term, creating ruptures with local and even regional implications, the relationship between capitalism and nation-states over the long-term is rooted in their undeniable, mutual interests. Globalization and neoliberalism are deeply anchored in the idea that the relationship between the nation-state and capitalism is irreversible, and both are dependent on the dissemination of repressive racializing, gendering, sexualizing, classist, debilitating and ablest logics that we have all internalized and replicate at the horizontal level. Capitalist-states are not just administrative structures; they shape our understanding of the world, including our own identities and selves. They structure our thoughts, and fine-tune our behavioral patterns, feelings and emotions. As our 'real father', the nation-state teaches us how to become authoritarian, to hierarchize, covet and hoard power, to categorize and discipline

others and ourselves. Capitalism, our ‘representative mother’, teaches us how to commoditize, individualize, and commercialize as well as materialize not only space/time, but also love, friendships, solidarity, ally ship and land. We even commercialize symbols of anti-capitalist resistance on our t-shirts and MacBook stickers.

Second, when recent social movements claim they fear that Trump has ushered-in fascism, they are naively mistaking fascism for totalitarianism. Totalitarians impose draconian order from above through force, be it via police repression, legislative and judicial power, or even national emergencies, imposed curfews, and military regimes. Fascism is promulgated at the horizontal levels of the family, neighborhoods, schools, factories, hospitals etc., and its goal is to transform us all into egoistic little Mussolinis and mini-gods in our public and private behaviors. Fascism is facilitated through the dissemination of cultural and spiritual stereotypes that we all reenact. Fascism spirals from the top down, but is reinforced from the bottom-up and is reenacted horizontally in our daily lives. Fascism is the cancer we must fight and our liberation depends on it. What makes fascism more dangerous than totalitarianism is its insidiousness: fascism is mobilized on a mass scale that operates in all vectors and directions. In particular, fascism is encoded within and reinforced by the capitalist-states and we express our internalized micro-fascisms relative to the symbolic and structural privileges that we each positionally enjoy and reproduce at the grassroots level during our social encounters. Struggling against fascism means struggling against our own selves.

In order to reassert control over our own lives and perhaps achieve more egalitarian horizons, we must acknowledge that we all participate in the replication of the sexism, racism, classism, transphobia, biophobia and ablest oppressions that colonial ‘cultures of whiteness’ produce and relentlessly disseminate through capitalist-state frameworks. We cannot eradicate power differentials in our encounters, but we can delineate them by combatting our internalized micro-fascisms and taking responsibility as individuals and communities for altering prejudices that blind our inner hearts, spirits, and actions. Failing to distinguish between fascism and totalitarianism cripples our social movements, especially those that are trying to embody resistance.

Resistance does not operate in a vacuum but rather evolves in a historical colonial context in which nations and their constituents have defined false and true myths of themselves and their pasts. While white supremacist tendencies and assumptions overtly inform conservative right-wing parties and positions, the greater danger is how they covertly and underhandedly disguise themselves within (neo)liberal progressive and even leftist positions. That is the danger of forming a ‘resistance’ in an Orwellian, post-alternative fact and schizophrenic world where the destructive legacy of liberalism defines even our words and their meanings. For example, we perceive the Heineken and Johnnie Walker-sponsored pride parades and Women’s Marches as resistance, despite the fact that these movements are premised on bleached notions of non-violence, gay marriage, coming out narratives, pride, and shame. In fact, these protests represent important but temporary and exhausting public displays of revolt; they are limited and reactionary, because they are based on a Western notion of ‘freedom of assembly’ and do not offer any ethical-political, decolonial, land-based alternatives. What further exposes the futility and contradiction of these acts of dissent is that they are enacted on stolen Indigenous land in settler-colonial societies like the U.S., which render Black bodies as disposable. Even more proof of their ineffectiveness is the fact that this resistance is always surrounded by trigger-happy, slave-catching police forces from which we seek sanctioned-permits to protest in an NRA, Bonnie and Clyde culture that is sadistically obsessed with its imperialist, hyper-masculine, soldiers and military industrial complexes.

Our internalization of these colonial and capitalist-state logics is reflected in our contradictory ethical-political positions in which cis-heteropatriarchy, homo-nationalism and pinkwashing are constantly reiterated within our movements. Homonationalism domesticates and neutralizes queer communities under white settler-state authority, while cis-heteropatriarchy preserves Victorian notions of nuclear family units, privatized routes of inheritance, and the individualist and commoditized ownership of land and nonhuman life. Pinkwashing is the Israeli state's instrumentalization of LGBTQ-friendly images and rights for Zionists, with Euro-American collusion, which is then used to deflect attention from the Israeli settler-colonial occupation of what is deemed to be a 'backward' Palestine. Within capitalist-states, homonationalism, cis-heteropatriarchy, and pinkwashing have the particular effect of infantilizing POC.

Colonized individuals and communities of color are faced with false binaries: they are heroes/villains, civilized/primitive, victims/perpetrators, innocent/evil. We are then offered two reactionary responses to our internalized traumas. The first is orientalism, as we strive to become good law-abiding citizens who opt for reform and deify a colonial constitution based on individualist protestant-Weberian capitalist ethics of individualism, inheritance, and property rights. The second, especially in the case of Muslims, is that we can become fundamentalist, mindless terrorists who reenact our traumas by adopting violence as a sole holistic strategy. This violence is clearly distinguished from the violence of the capitalist-states, including the relentless violence of sexism, racism, ageism, classism, etc. that we experience and are exposed to everyday. Applied transnationally to Syria, this false binary formula means having to choose between an imperialist, colonialist, militarized interventionist Crusading-Zionist-Wahhabi alliance in the disguised and despotic name of human rights and democracy, or a similar Russian-Iranian-Syrian authoritarian coalition and axis.

America was never great, nor will it ever be. America is a settler-colonial society that arose from and continues to thrive on a simultaneous double helix. The first strand of the helix, enacted in 1492, is internal colonization. This consisted of the genocidal-extirpation of Indigenous people and the enslavement and indentured servitude of Middle Passage Black peoples to support a plantation economy, a hardly insignificant number of who were Muslims. The second strand is external colonization, which is intimately linked to geo-political, imperialist, militarized adventurism.

In the case of diasporic Muslims, millions of recent arrivants to the U.S./Canada have been driven to become POC settlers because of the destruction and devastating conditions reaped upon our original homelands. However, we must beg the question, at whose expense is our migration to Empire made possible? Who continues to suffer, including our own families and peoples, in our motherlands? Diasporic Muslim POC must understand that we are complicit in upholding settler-colonialism. Our complicity consists of the daily dispossession and denial of Indigenous people's futurities and land (the true source of wealth), in addition to a continuing after-life of slavery that has globally made Black bodies hyper-visible and invisible. This modern enslavement is now manifest in even more complicated forms including the weaponization of blackness that pits Transatlantic Blacks against new African diasporas, as we all aspire towards ascendant European values and seductive social incentives and upward mobility. As settlers of color, we cannot simply and purely whitewash away our complicities in settler-colonialism through the adoption of an unapologetic 'hyphenated-American' citizen-identity, which is a colonial identity that allows settler-colonialism, imperialism, neoliberalism, and global orientalism to thrive. In our own settler-colonial U.S./Canadian landscape, our integration as diasporic Muslim POC ar-

rives at the expense of Indigenous and Black peoples. The refusal of diasporic Muslim POC to critically interrogate their settler-colonial positionings and to decolonize their colonized identities and interpretations of Islam makes us no different from Zionist settlers in Palestine.

Furthermore, I argue that decolonizing Islam is not only fundamental to the repositioning of arrivants, but to the liberation of all peoples, not only because of the geopolitical context of Islamophobia and Islam as a quintessential Other in modernity, but also arguably because of Islam's founding on and relationship to social justice for all our species and nonhuman life. Decolonizing Islam means resurrecting a Qur'an of the oppressed. In tandem to this, decolonizing Islam requires resurgent Muslims to embody this socially-just Qur'an and to address our multiple and cross valiant oppressions, including Arab supremacy, which is identified in the Qur'an, as well as our present disregard for nonhuman life, sexism, anti-Blackness, and participation in anti-Indigenous politics etc. These injustices and sicknesses fester within our own migrant and global communities. so that we in the diaspora make hypocritical and costly trade-offs of our Muslim responsibilities in exchange for the 'American Dream', and we participate in the oppression of Indigenous and Black people's in exchange for the fantasy of Palestinian liberation. The destructive legacy of (neo)liberalism far supersedes that of (neo)conservatism.

Identity politics – as a product of (neo)liberalism – are tactically useful because of the ongoing, real, visceral, symbolic, structural and material violence suffered by the multiple 'Other' every moment of everyday. However, identity politics are also strategically limited, as they are themselves categories and reference points informed by Euro-American and (neo)liberal structural and symbolic ontologies/epistemologies.

Decolonization and Re-Indigenization

Unlike the familiar progressive and liberal-leftist movements, decolonization does not rely on the seizure of state power. Rather, decolonization is a biodiverse project of grounded reliving on the land that allows us to relearn how to dream, walk, feel, speak, listen, act, love, disagree, eat, seek shelter, identify and relate to each other and nonhuman life as a symbiotic community. Decolonization, unlike European Marxist-leftist-socialist trajectories (which many perceive as radical), does not anthropomorphize land or treat it as property. In this sense, decolonization seeks to transcend 'empowering' international neo-development projects and (neo)liberal ecological environmentalism.

In particular, decolonization does not assume that we are pure, or that we should all become romanticized tree-hugging hippies. It does not involve a 'return to innocence' and is not based on romanticized and righteous notions of the past. Rather, decolonization demands that we distinguish between general moral dictums and ethical practices, and therefore recognize that although the latter are derivatively related to the former, they are always contingent on spatial/temporal contexts. For example, moral dictums such as 'Thou shall not kill' should be suspended in an ethical situation in which our lives and lands are under imminent threat. In this sense, decolonization necessitates that we extract ethical-political and spiritual non-authoritarian and non-capitalist (etc.) concepts and practices from our pre-modern spiritual and cultural paradigms and apply them to our relationship to land in the present-future. The perception that learning from the land is primitive is based on our colonial internalization of modern European logics of 'civilization', 'culture', 'sexuality', 'progress', 'liberation', 'renaissance', 'development', 'decadence', as well as

the contemporary non-existent division between the 'private/public'. The last is especially true in a post-9/11-Snowden age in which we are all digitally constructed, surveilled, mined, and harvested online through cameras on our laptops, televisions and smart phones. Those of us decolonially capable of cogently interlinking ethical-political and spiritual struggles and constructing alternative histories and narratives are ranked at most threatening on the radical matrix.

Moreover, decolonization is an inherently communitarian spiritual act – which distinguished it from the majority of European Anarchist trajectories that condemn religion, in particular monotheistic faiths, based on myopic experiences with imperialist/colonialist Christianities. In Islam, religion (dīn), faith (īmān), and spirituality (ruhāniya), are three interrelated non-individualist and distinct communitarian concepts. Islam acknowledges that over 124,000 prophets have been sent to different tribes and nations since creation so that we may, as the Qur'anic verse 49:13 states, “get to know one another” and vie with one another in ethical-political responsibilities towards each other and nonhuman life. Separately and collectively, all three concepts have been historically used across space/time by all peoples and societies to uphold liberation and social justice, but also to suppress it.

Diasporic Muslim POC must adopt Palestine as an ethical-political compass from which to orient our activist responsibilities towards Indigenous and Black peoples in the U.S./Canada. Not only because decolonization is a spiritual act directed at social justice, but because of Palestine's historical and spiritual significance to Muslims since Islam's dawn. Palestine and Jerusalem (al-quds) served as the initial qibla (direction) that Muslims prayed to, and is now regarded as the third holiest site to Muslims, following Mecca, which Muslims now pray to, and Medina. Liberating Palestine is not only a pan-Arab cause; it is an even more potent as a pan-Islamic conviction. While the former cause orbits around 420 million Arabs (a racial/ethnic identity that includes Eastern Christians, Druze, Muslims, Jews, and Bedouins), the latter engages 1.8 billion Muslims who circularly revolve around a spiritual signifier Islam (that ultimately seeks to transcend all identity politics). Neither figures include transnational allies across the world, affected by the Non-Aligned Movement and the Bandung Conferences' spirit(s), that continue to believe in Palestine as a just ideal and necessary struggle. While pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism are not necessarily opposing dualities, they are evoked here to highlight the essentialist limitations and potentials of both in light of issues such as, on the one hand, Arab supremacy, and on the other hand, Sunni exceptionalism. Both pan-Arabism and pan-Islamism are contingent on how one ultimately interprets the identities Arab and Muslim. However, as noted earlier, Islam's exceptional power and transcendental appeal, unlike the identity Arab, is that it ideally revolves around the non-identitarian global message and bond of spirituality, which is a fundamental tenant of decolonization that cannot be dismissed.

This is particularly the case, when one Islamically expands the definition of who and what is a spiritual believer to depend on the ethical-political commitments and practices we all follow despite our diverse traditions and paths to the same Creator and in relation to (non)human life. In this sense, it is irrelevant from a Qur'anic perspective and as I argued elsewhere, whether or not individuals and communities explicitly identify as Muslim or not. Besides the Qur'anic injunction that there “is no compulsion in religion”, in numerous verses as 2:251, 7:56, 7:74, 8:73, 11:116, 12:73, 13:25, 26:152, 27:48 and 47:22 etc., the Qur'an explicitly describes disbelievers, amongst many other facets, as those who dabble in “excess”, uphold “injustice”, spread “mischief” and “corrupt the earth”.

Decolonization also (further) involves a violent unsettling of everything that ‘cultures of whiteness’ and their ‘civilizational progressive’ values ushered in. This, in fact, constitutes most of the presuppositions you and I know of our entwined colonially fractured histories and present identity crises. Decolonization involves unavoidable violence in the unmaking of our own liberal-constructed identities and the dismantling of the ‘Oppression Olympics’ that endlessly pit us against one another; as colonized Indigenous, Black, and POC communities we ought to be natural allies. Therefore, decolonization is an active (not reactive colonial) act.

Decolonization demands that we recognize our species’ creative and unfathomable feats, yet also our disposability, finiteness, and insignificance. Killing/murdering the Creator and crowning ourselves as omnipotent is not a solution, as that does not disappear a dead God’s space or power-vacuum. Rather, it transforms us all into demagogues vying for the usurpation of that space and power relative to nonhuman life, as the example of the initial 18 days of the January 2011 Tahrir Uprisings uniquely proved. Given Egypt’s complicity in the Zionist occupation of Palestine, dethroning the pharaoh Hosni Mubarak – who at this moment is out of prison – was not the real struggle. After all, Mubarak has since been replaced by Mohamed Morsi (presently incarcerated) and now, in exchange, the ever more ruthless-military-junta of a dictator Abdel-Fattah El-Sisi who makes Mubarak’s 30-year reign seem like a horizonless utopia. Rather, the real struggle has always been how Egyptians (and perhaps others all over the world) can permanently (given the analysis above) sustain the decolonial, horizontalist momentum of non-authoritarian and non-materialist, as well as anti-colonial and anti-imperial, organizing to make the capitalist-state totally irrelevant regionally and transnationally. Although during the initial Tahrir Uprisings, Egyptians were united under the false banner of nationalism that camouflaged their ethical-political, ethnic, gendered, and spiritual differences, the movement also offered a hopeful glimpse of an alternative spirit and world manifested in the innovative initiatives it incepted. Examples of these include al-lijan al-sha’biyah (or ‘popular assemblies’), neighborhood councils, security checks points (given, that over 99 police stations were burnt to the ground), and the sharing of necessary food and shelter (while sleeping and living on what are and should have always been a people’s public streets and squares).

As such, decolonization centrally entails the embrace of a politics of responsibility and accountability (not a capitalist-state politics of citizenship rights) to (non)human life. As a participant in the Egyptian uprisings who has been and is involved with radical Indigenous, Black, and POC movements in settler-colonial US/Canada, as well as the Global South, and as a radical non-statist and non-capitalist Muslim, I am disinterested in reactionary colonized responses manifesting in neo-conservative movements such as ISIS/Al-Qaeda/the Muslim Brotherhood. As an unapologetic ‘Islamist’ – a European term that relies on the presumptive Western segregation and compartmentalization of spirituality from politics – I am also equally disinterested in the neo-orientalist integration of myself into worldly capitalist nation-state paradigms.

Decolonization demands that we do not engage in self-righteousness, but rather acknowledge that we are all authoritarians and capitalists. This is even true when we are radically and decolonially seeking to construct alternative ethical-political paradigms to capitalist nation-state archetypes. Hence we must recognize the difference between polemical anti-authoritarian and anti-capitalist rhetoric and the actual extraction and application of non-authoritarian and non-capitalist land-based concepts and practices that will allow us to construct a different world. Decolonization’s non- and anti-statist and non- and anti-capitalist foundations inherently and explicitly mean the dissolution of settler-colonial America and Canada, and in this context, a

return to Turtle Island. If decolonization revolves around undoing oppression and the capitalist nation-state structures that sustain it, then reindigenization is the act of re-imaginatively and practically recreating an alternative world through the non-authoritarian, non-materialist, non-individualist, gender egalitarian, socially just commitments and responsibilities we retrieved from our cultures and spiritualities and that we are now collectively applying towards a distinct pluriverse world. These alternatives, at least, include 1) holistic understandings of transformative justice (dismantling the prison industrial complexes); 2) healing (unmaking the biomedical and pharmaceutical industrial complexes); and 3) ethical frameworks of hospitality and conflict resolution for mitigating our disagreements when and should they arrive (in Islam, these are referred to as Usul al-Diyafa and Usul al-Ikhtilaf).

In this historical moment, it is therefore rather disheartening to see old and new generations defer to institutionalized social democrats and professionalized liberal-leftist-political positions that actually dilute and pollute the potential for more radical politics. The social movements that have recently been seen as the barometer for ‘social change’ and ‘revolutionary activism’, such as that of Bernie Sanders, inadequately address gender, racial, and sexual politics, and ultimately believe in U.S. settler-colonial closed borders. This is equally true of the new democratic Congress womyn Rashida Tlaib, Ilhan Omar, and Alexandria Ocasio Cortez who not only unapologetically insist on a colonial ‘American’ identity, but also are also encouraging support for the so-called ‘Green New Deal’. Within it, Cortez and the deal’s architects pay empty reconciliatory lip-service to Indigenous land and peoples. They claim that the new social contract, that is being compared with the Moon-landing and named after Franklin D. Roosevelt’s Industrial New Deal, will: “Obtain [...] the free, prior, and informed consent of [I]ndigenous people for all decisions that affect [I]ndigenous people and their traditional territories, honoring all treaties and agreements with indigenous people, and protecting and enforcing the sovereignty and land rights of [I]ndigenous people”. This statement alone is evidence of (neo)liberalism’s destructive affect and its persistent permeation into all our politics. It demonstrates that Cortez and her supporters are either confused or do not comprehend the implications of their own statements and political stances. Though they certainly are not monolithic, decolonial Indigenous conceptualizations of sovereignty, self-determination, and nationhood are fundamentally antithetical and irreconcilable with not only capitalism but also nation-state paradigms and hence oppose the paternalism and stewardship of both parents. The rhetorical words of these congressional politicians and their policies blatantly ignore that all of America is stolen Indigenous land that must be immediately rematriated and repatriated. This especially holds weight if the over 500 broken treaties, as the Green New Deal insists, are to be finally applied after over 500 years of post-Colombian unbaiting reigns of terror, enslavement, and settlement.

This (neo)liberalism imbued within these alleged reconciliations and other colonially contrived identities is deeply troublesome. It sustains both settler-colonialism and America’s imperialist aspirations in franchise or so-called postcolonial societies like Egypt. It also further geopolitically normalizes Palestinian occupation as well as distracts attention from the local and transnational decolonial work that some of us are engaged in. Decolonization and reindigenization mean that diasporic POC Muslims must embrace the full responsibilities and struggles imbued in the Islamic term hijra (migration) and the Medina Charter. Muslims engaged in two early migrations over 1439 years ago during Prophet Muhammad’s time. The first was from Mecca to Abyssinia where they were protected and offered safe-haven by the Christian King Negus, who later converted to Islam. The second was to the Ansar (the Helpers) of Medina. Diasporic POC Muslims

in settler-colonies such as the US/Canada cannot sanctimoniously claim to speak for the liberation of Palestine without recognizing that the Indigenous land they now stand and breathe on must be fully rematriated and repatriated to Indigenous peoples. This is the measure of 'victory' as opposed to the squabbling over Empire's scraps and spoils through electoral-representative 'democratic' systems in midterm and presidential elections that will supposedly usher in a just society and worldly liberation for us all. This is critical in a defining moment in which innumerable peoples are concerned with a decaying globe, which our existence relies on, and that has its own timetable, in light of what we have collectively squandered, raped and pillaged of it. Decolonization further means moving radically beyond Ta-Nehsi Coates' European Zionist framework for reparations. Coates' schema and logic denies Indigenous deposition and nonsensically relies on a capitalist insurance tabulate of dollar cent figures in the devalued redressing of human misery, shackling and death, which no price tag can be assigned to. What of after-life reparations to the ongoing slavery enacted through Stand-Your-Ground laws, police brutality and premeditated extrajudicial killings, routine 'Stop and Frisk' programs, 'Policies of Broken Windows', voter disenfranchisement, and a shattered criminal justice system? What reparations can recompense for racial capitalism as well as School-to-Prison pipelines, impoverishment and premature deaths, 1994 Crime bills that Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders voted for and that superfluously target and incarcerate Black youth who are referred to as 'thugs' and 'super-predators'? What of reparations to Mexican-Americans, deprived by the Mexican-American war of the right to migrate into what was then half of their former nation? What of Japanese Americans, interned during World War II and Chinese Americans and their sufferings under the Oriental Exclusion Acts? Rather, in this instance, decolonization ought to mean following the lead of nascent movements such as the Dream-Defenders in linking Black and Indigenous struggles to Palestinian liberation. There is no free Palestine from the River to the Sea till Indigenous and Black peoples are liberated of settler-colonialism here in the US/Canada and vice versa.

On Solidarity & Ally-ship

As for 'allies' of European descent it must be understood that – as Indigenous, Blacks, Muslims and POC – we continue to be exposed to physical, cultural, mental, and spiritual pathological torture, in part, through compartmentalized European neoliberal academic knowledge systems. These include prejudicial and conventional Eurocentric fields of study that masquerade as universal knowledges, such as anthropology, history sociology, art, engineering, agricultural and physical sciences, as well as medicine and venerated individualist discourses like psychoanalysis. These compartmentalized discourses are ontologically/epistemologically ill-suited, narrow, and incongruent with the communitarian, sophisticated, and de-segregated knowledge systems of Indigenous, Black, and POC ways of life, oral traditions, stories, analyses, and narratives that are all too often cast by the West as 'myths', 'superstitious', and 'non-scientific'. However, to us, our knowledge systems are multiple, collaborative, and accumulative living memories that are intensely embedded in cosmological, cultural, and spiritual land-based techniques, skills, value-systems, and ways of knowing, which as minorities we are collectively seeking to reclaim and reinvent through reindigenization.

European allies must comprehend the extent of power and privilege they possess relative to those of us who have been trained to resent ourselves, our spiritualities, and skin color, and to

engage in the reactionary neofundamentalist/neorientalist politics described above. From birth, we aspire to the humanity of whites and whiteness, not recognizing our own dehumanization. We are expected to shoulder the responsibilities of learning to tone police ourselves, to educate you – as European allies – on our struggles while also unlearning, re-binding, and re-teaching our own Indigenous, Black, Muslim, and POC communities. To be taken seriously, we are expected to write legibly, linearly, coherently, rationally, and nonviolently, or otherwise risk being pegged as engaging in ‘reverse racism’. Or worse, reinforcing the perception that we are angry, savage lunatics engaged in ranting and raging diatribes, a view that justifies our eviction, despite our life and death struggles for existence presently exemplified in movements like Black Lives Matter, Idle No More, and No DAPL. We are expected to learn European languages, sciences, medicines, architecture, technologies, humanities, gender, queer, poststructuralist political philosophies and social movement theories that are privileged over our own mother tongues, and cultural and spiritual ways of life. We shoulder these enormous burdens and more without necessarily similarly witnessing the reciprocation of that accountability and responsibility from the end of Euro-American allies. Moreover, when Euro-American ally ship finally arrives, if it genuinely does, it is restricted to some of our struggles and comes at the cost of others in the absence of the responsibility to recognize how they are interlinked. This occurs despite Euro-American complicity in not just settler-colonialism, but also imperialism, neoliberalism, global orientalism, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, etc. In turn, it is troubling to witness the hesitancy of Euro-American allies, if not their limitation and outright refusal to fully embrace what decolonization fundamentally entails, although it ought to violently unsettle us all at the level of the reconfiguring of our identities and responsibilities, including our notions of belongings and home.

This does not mean that Euro-American allies will lead or usurp decolonization/reindigenization. It is ours to strategize, and theirs to engage, partake in, and support, even if that entails placing their bodies on the line for us, as ours have been all along and continue to be. And yet, as Indigenous, Black people, and POC, we stand tall, heads up, shoulders back, and rise resurgent, despite the indignity and disrespect we receive. Even when Euro-American allies polemically espouse more radical non-statist and non-capitalist social movement trajectories, beyond the reformist liberal-progressive agendas described above, it is often the case that they constrain their own responsibilities and homework. For instance, when they delimit their activism, teaching, and scholarly citation trails to European literatures that suit their philosophical debates, fragile egos, guilt and comfort as well as the empty darkness of their own conceits.

A general example that demonstrates the type of ally ship and solidarity we resent is one that ends up exacerbating the distrust and fruitless solidarities between us. For instance, when a straw-person European scholar/activist who espouses ‘radical’ anarchist politics decides to become a new Muslim revert/convert, and then proceeds to anthropologically mine Islam in order to publish book after book and does so quickly as a *savoir-messiah* without having adequately engaged Islamic methodologies, learned Arabic, or even acknowledged their own position or responsibilities as a settler and their complicity in settler-colonialism. This is done under the presumption (perhaps) that their conversion to Islam whitewashes their local anti-Indigenous, anti-Black, and transnational collusions, not recognizing that this race to innocence is, in fact, anti- if not blatantly un-Islamic and devalues the Creator’s teachings and word. Unlike disenfranchised Muslim POC, and regardless of whether white reverts/converts change their European names and orientally don Muslim garb to reflect their newly found Muslim identities, the color of their

skin and the politics of citizenships – which document their original Euro-Americans places of birth – shields them from daily outing and scrutiny. Their whiteness shelters them from being interrogated for hours, if not days, and humiliated by being stripped naked as newborns in airports and archived on Terror Watch-Lists. Similarly, Euro-American allies cannot continue to ornamental deploy intersectionality without understanding that in the absence of a decolonial/anti-colonial/and anti-imperial framework in their analyses, their narrative is, in fact, toothless. Euro-American allies cannot continue to teach gender and queer theories without engaging Indigenous and radical Black feminisms as well as Two-Spirit, queer Indigenous, queer Black, and queer of color critiques, especially when the former discourses center settler-colonialism. Empire's settler-colonialism informs the very context in which all theories must be applied and the trajectory in which social movements are mobilized relative to both local struggles and similar resistances worldwide.

I believe that Islam is inherently anarchistic, feminist, queer, and emphasizes social justice (etc.). Therefore, I ask the following rhetorical question: Why am I obligated to endlessly identify myself using terms such as Muslim anarchist or Muslim feminist as a precondition for solidarity with Euro-American others who insist these terms are oxymorons? It is yet another way in which I am required to justify my own existence to white gazes (and the POC affected by them). I continue to use these terms as a tactic to undo stereotypes and open foreclosed conversations on the ground (i.e. the grassroots). I do it to facilitate cross-disciplinary knowledge and social movement deliberations, not to convince you – as Euro-American allies – or assimilate into your paradigms without engagement; I said the question was rhetorical. If white allies are indeed serious about being regarded as true allies that are worthy of our trust, which is not implicit because they are 'activists', they ought to reflect on the innumerable consequences of the actions that they participate in and that further entrench colonialism, imperialism, neoliberalism, and misery. Activism is not an institutionalized or armchair job that we practice when convenient and in the comfort of our homes. For us – Indigenous, Black people, and POC – it is our life, because our daily collective survival, resistance, and existence in this war is contingent upon it.

In the end, our entire species has capitulated to European values and 'cultures of whiteness'. In turn, the only decolonial and collective way out the liberal identities we have all embraced is to recognize that what ought matter is not simplistic notions of whether one is white, a POC, Indigenous, Black, Muslim, Jewish, Christian, anarchist, Marxist, feminist, queer etc. Rather, what should always take precedence are the strategic ethical-political commitments and responsibilities that ought to inform these identities given our distinctive positionalities. This is particularly important given liberalism's destructive legacy on all our identity formations. In other words, being a Muslim does not inherently make you a member of a community striving towards decolonization and reindigenization. Similarly, just because one is racially/ethnically white does not implicitly or explicitly imply that you are a hostile foe to decolonization. Rather, what is more important is our individual and collective owning up to our ethical-political commitments; our privileges arrive with responsibilities, and we have distinct and yet mutually constituted locations of resistance. Ally-ship will always be conditional on action-specific ethical-political commitments, just as one would not open their door and offer unconditional hospitality to a rapist, misogynist, or a white supremacist. After all, we do not live in a colorblind or feminist world. However, if we wish to achieve such a world, then those of us occupying exceptional sites of power must consistently earn the confidence of those who are far less privileged and dispossessed. We do so by making room for the amplification of the latter's already existing resistance and agency, which

is often enough drowned, marginalized, and silenced by more privileged voices. That is what sharing privilege is; it is distinct from guilt, which re-centers the privileged without obligating their accountability and responsibility and therefore benefits neither the oppressor or oppressed. It is for this reason that our notion of liberation cannot come at the price of someone else's subjugation, because none of us are free until we all are.

Conclusion

Decolonial horizons are hindered by the fact that, as a species, none of us are willing to sacrifice what is vitally necessary today for the promise of a seemingly impossible tomorrow. Instead, we consume more numbing T.V. shows, more video games with simulated violence, more movies with Hollywoodian characterizations of love, more industrial processed foods disconnecting us from land. We are all on board a sinking Titanic called 'progress', and though we can all see the icebergs, we are steering for them anyways. Bring your ears closer to my lips and listen carefully: Empire cannot be saved. It is finally collapsing, and there is nothing we can do to rescue it, besides decolonizing and reindigenizing, while hoping that it is not too late for our species, and thank the Creator for that! Enough with the ahistorical revisionism and historical amnesia! Enough with militarized patriotism and paternalistic cis-heteropatriarchal colonial understandings of nationalism. Let us educate ourselves about what we fear and have abdicated our collective responsibilities towards. Let us read, read, and listen, listen, listen, and then read some more, before we act, or even move our overzealous lips and tongues, because possessing both does not entitle us to speech. Now is a time of treason and an opportunity for all of us to betray our collusive imperial/colonial nation-states, and anything less than that transforms us into traitors after a forsaken rhetorical and polemical cause called liberation, nothing more. As Indigenous, Black people, and POC, we already have enough Red, Black, and Brown skinned traitors in our communities who wear white masks and strive towards European values and 'cultures of whiteness'. They have waged war upon us and seek the eradication of our ways of becoming and belonging since before we were even born and were severed from our mothers and grandmothers' umbilical cords into this schizophrenic world with all its ill-reckonings and possible militant joys. Our warriors and veterans ought not be attention-seeking celebrity clowns on CNN and Fox, on Twitter, Youtube, and Facebook, nor ought they have Hollywood's support and they certainly are not on the cover of Rolling Stone or listed amongst the 500 most influential Muslims. Rather, they are the silenced and unsung everyday inspirers of our existence who are on the front lines of Great Gazan Marches of Return, Ferguson, and Unist'ot'en Camps and who never compromise their ethical-political spiritual compasses. They are from the bosom and extensions of visionaries such as Fadwa Tuqan, Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, Frantz Fanon, Kwame Nkrumah, Bhagat Singh, al-Muntabbi, Shakir al-Sayyib, Abdul Qadir Gilani, Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, Red Cloud, Geronimo, the Panthers, the Zapatistas, and many, many more. Tell me again how it might be, while others and I tell it how it is – we have learned and are continuing to learn from mountainous legacies and living icons that never perished and on whose shoulders we stand. Enough self-congratulatory praise for celebrity activists engaged in unneeded, un-praiseworthy, and unnecessary settler-colonial games of assimilationist congressional 'accomplishments' and debilitating accommodationist, Band-Aid solutions.

Whatever happens, I leave it all to the Creator, whether it is disheartening heartache or the fame and fortune that we are all running after and hungry for. As a wandering-traveler on this land, I will continue learning until I soon turn the corner in that rite of passage from which there is no escape and that is written upon us all. Till then, the satirical show goes on. As with all I write, whatever benefit is from the Creator and those who taught, sacrificed, and laid the paths I now journey upon. As for the shortcomings, they are mine alone.

*The strategic choice to not cite 10-20 activist-scholarships for every argumentative point made is not beyond me. Rather, it's a decision I made so as to not overwhelm the text or deter an ostensible public audience, for now, from reading and engagement.

The Anarchist Library
Anti-Copyright



Mohamed Jean Veneuse
Transnational Decolonization Is the Solution, Not Movements such as Bernie Sanders' & the
Women's March
2019

written by: Mohamed Abdou (aka/pseudonym: Mohamed 'Jean Veneuse')

theanarchistlibrary.org