

**Land Back Abolition
at UNC**
**A Self-guided Learning Journey
towards Decolonisation**

2023

Natalie Brunner, Julia Holcomb & Jacinta Bailey



This document was conceived, written, and created on
sovereign Occaneechi Land of the Saponi Indian Nation.

We pay our deep respects, gratitude, and love to this land
and to the Occaneechi Ancestors, Peoples, and the Saponi Communities that have
cared for this land since time immemorial.

In using this document we ask that you walk slowly and mindfully, navigating
these stories with humility, respect and good spirit.

This land is living, let us listen deeply to her.
This land is living, let us care for her as kin.

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Theoretical Grounding

“There is deep knowledge in our languages. There is a spirit of learning in our words. This is more than just knowledge of what to learn, but knowledge of how we learn it. This is our pedagogy, our way of learning. We find it in language words about thinking and communicating. We find it in language structure, in the way things are repeated and come around in a circle, showing us how we think and use information. The patterns in stories, phrases, songs, kinship and even in the land can show us the spirit of learning that lives in our cultures....

...From our language and our land knowledge we know there are always connections between all things, places where different elements are no longer separate but mix together and become something else. This way of working gives us new innovations as well as bringing us together. There are eight ways of learning that have been found at this interface of two worlds.”

(Yunkaporta, 2010 p.37)¹

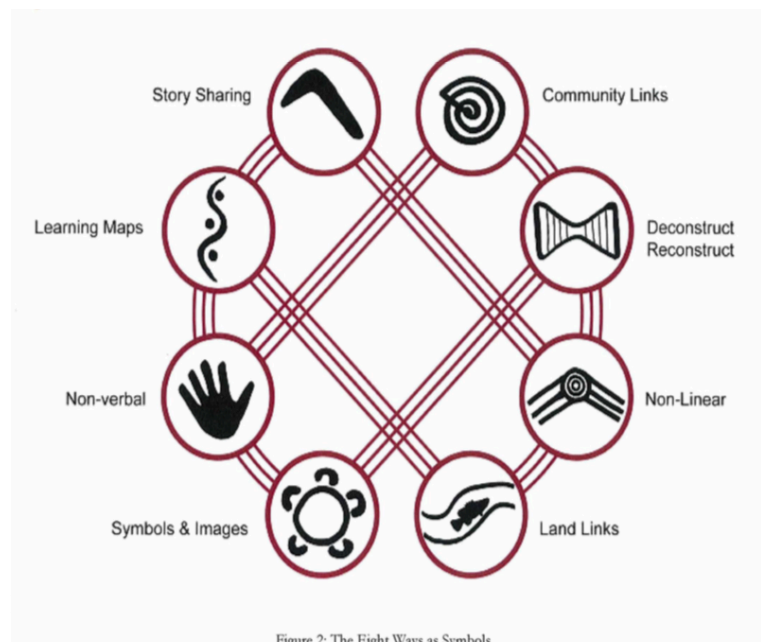


Figure 2: The Eight Ways as Symbols

Tyson Yunkaporta is an Aboriginal Apalech man from the Indigenous Nations now known as Australia. His Aboriginal Learning Pedagogy, The 8 Ways, is the theoretical grounding of this Self-guided Learning Journey.

While the stories of Australia and the Occanechi, Saponi and Cherokee lands of UNC at first seem far removed, there exist deep

ages. In J. Hobson, K. Lowe, S. Poetsch, & revitalisation of Australia's Indigenous

connections in Traditional Knowledges and cultural ways of learning that live beyond borders. Therefore, we have intentionally crafted this learning journey to be grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing, doing, and learning; decolonization as process rather than theory. In doing so, you should not expect a passive learning journey but a call to engage deeply, through listening, story sharing, land links and visual mapping processes.

As non-Indigenous peoples, the journey towards meaningful allyship must first begin by locating ourselves between the stories we have been told and the stories of the lands where we live, learn, play, and benefit from. For without understanding our situatedness, reckoning with our ancestral roots of power, privilege, and (dis)connection, how will we ever be able to listen deeply to this land, her Native Peoples, and stand firmly in learning, listening, and active solidarity with the Indigenous Land Back and Black Reparations, Abolition Justice movements?

Accordingly, this document is designed with 8 Ways of Learning as our guide. Each section provides stories through video, audio, and written mediums to connect you with the stories of Indigenous peoples locally, nationally and globally; deconstructing and reconstructing this movement. The document grounds learning through local Community Links of Black and Indigenous justice movements here across UNC, reaffirming that Community is at the center of everything.

Learning is a reciprocal process and land is our oldest teacher. Honoring this, we provide learning invitations throughout the document to reconnect you with this land, her stories of past, present, and future.

Who we are, why we gift this...

“When we talk about Land Back it is about maintaining that relationship and those identities. For us it is about restoring relationships.”

(Eriel Tchekwie Deranger, Dene woman)²

Land Back is about correcting the long history of colonization on this land. Land Back recognizes that colonization is ongoing, evident in the pervasive view of land as property and economic resource; something that can be stolen, owned, controlled, and exploited.

Land Back acknowledges that this land is sovereign, interconnected to Indigenous Communities, languages, and cultures, and recognizes that Land is our Sacred Kin, our Family.

Land Back is about restoring relationships. This movement invites us to repair our relationships with each other, with the land, and with all living beings. This journey requires love and compassion.

Land Back is not about your feelings, although feeling is an important part of the journey because repairing relationships and unlearning our colonial worldview is an emotional process that requires accountability and commitment.

Importantly, this document will not make you an expert in Land Back Abolition, nor will it make you an ally; both require a lifelong commitment and learning journey. What this document aims to provide is an entry pathway to begin your journey of learning, unlearning, and repair with the land and the Indigenous and Black Communities whose stories are deeply rooted here.

² Podcast: I am the Water: Grassy Narrows’ Land Back Story, 2023. In the Mix podcast. Listen: <https://open.spotify.com/episode/14sG0dSHt8ouL9aq8O5ukT?si=AgWw-E8FTFuwlTUyqyU2qg>

This Self-guided Learning journey was created under the guidance of Dr Sara Smith of the UNC Geography Department as part of the Fall 2023 Land Back Abolition Research Collective.

Jacinta Bailey is a white-bodied queer woman who was raised, grown, and remains connected to the Sovereign lands of the Dharawal, Gadigal and Darug nations across Sydney, Australia. Her ancestral roots are tied to settler colonial histories of Australia, with bloodlines towards Ireland and Poland. In Fall 2023, she arrived in Occaneechi Land as a Rotary Peace Fellow and is currently undertaking her Master of Global Studies. As an Education-based peacebuilder, she has worked with Indigenous Communities in Australia, and with Achuar Peoples in Ecuador, to co-design and implement meaningful lifelong learning programs. Arriving to UNC she was disheartened that many students did not know the stories of the land they learned on and thus, joined this team to provide a small contribution towards healing people's relationship with this land, her stories, her past, present and future.

Natalie Brunner is a mixed woman, of Irish, Mexican, and Indigenous blood. Born in San Diego, and raised in Los Angeles, I have been exposed throughout my life to land-back cases that have succeeded in the greater Los Angeles region, including in my own home-town: Bruce's Beach. This was a case of returning beachfront property wrongfully seized from Black owners over a century ago; however, this property worth over \$75 million was eventually returned to the family. This case sparked an interest in how land, our connection to land, and it being taken can influence families, and eventually generations. Being here at UNC from Los Angeles and not having extensive knowledge about the South, I was profoundly surprised by the University's unfortunate involvement in historical issues. Witnessing this, I felt a strong desire to contribute positively to the campus community. My intention is to shed light on the challenges faced by individuals here and offer support to those who may have experienced negativity, ensuring that a positive influence can prevail for everyone on this campus, especially for those who may have had their light dimmed by past events.

Julia Holcomb is a white, queer woman with roots in both Illinois and North Carolina. I have always recognized the deep, inseparable connection humans have had with the land – both the good and the bad. Being that I am a white person on stolen land, with little connection to my ancestral countries, I believe that it is my responsibility to understand the real history of theft, violence, and genocide that has ensued in this country. Growing up in Illinois, living on Ojibwe and Potawatomi land, I was surrounded by indigenous words in the names of parks, streets, or towns, with little recognition of these native cultures; *Illinois* comes from the Illini language, meaning “men” or “warriors”. Moving to North Carolina and later attending UNC Chapel Hill changed my personal geographies; I recognize that I reside in a state with a history of slavery and involvement in the confederacy, as well as live on Tuscarora, Siouan, and Occaneechi lands. However, my responsibilities still hold true: I intend to do what I can in order to increase public knowledge about the history of this land, and I hope that in the creation of this document, we restore some kind of empowerment and justice to our community.

History: Ways of knowing and forgetting



“The past is not yet done with, but looms large over future generations....The full content and history of who we were does not lie in your archives. Nor does it lie fully in the memories and knowledge passed down by generations of Indigenous people in their local regions and communities. And nor do the future possibilities for Indigenous people rely on our access to these archives and our access to these community reference points. Our futures do not even rely on knowing any ‘truth’ of what we were or can now become. We all have material out of which to construct valid identities and lives. It

is how we recognise contemporary lives and identities as the continuation of Indigenous histories that is at stake...

..Our own stories of ourselves are never just our own memories. They are never just our individual stories. Our own stories are never just Indigenous stories. Our own stories are always the stories of ourselves in our relation with others. None of us can ever know the full story of ourselves, but we can always extend those stories we already have to include those we have not yet discovered. We can always open our minds to what we do not yet know or have not yet thought about. ”

*(Martin Nakata, Torres Strait Islander Man)*³

Grounding:

History is a cultural product of storytelling, influenced and informed by our ways of knowing (epistemology) and our ways of seeing (ontology). In this way, history is never truly solid or immovable, rather, it is a recorded narrative that changes shape, adapting and adopting to the stories, perspectives, and knowledges that it desires to tell and those it obscures or omits.

The journey towards Land Back Abolition then requires us to learn and unlearn the limitations of our historical knowing which have been informed by historically designed categories of divide like race, gender, and power. History is a relational process and thus, the work of memory making and memory re-making is also a relational journey; people are public memory. To begin understanding how to achieve and support Indigenous Land Black Abolition movements at UNC and throughout the world, we must begin by deeply listening to the stories we hold; those that we've been told, sold, and learned as truth.

Especially for white-bodied learners, the process of Land Back first requires us to unlearn universal “truth” as self-evident. To do so, we must feel the ways we are connected and disconnected from this sovereign land. We must listen deeply to ourselves and the world, noticing the ways we are complicit in the dominant narratives of (whiteness) history. Unlearning this dominant narrative begins with story...

Learning Invitation:

History is never absent from feeling. Whiteness history, however, is built on a foundation of divorcing feeling from “fact”. Irrespective of our cultural bodies, we are part of the history of the land where we stand. Use the activities below to ground yourself in the living history of this place.

➤ Activity 1 - known and unknown.

Find a comfortable place outside and breathe deep. Allow your mind, body, and spirit to arrive;

³ Nakata, M. 2012. Indigenous memory, forgetting and the archives, Archives and Manuscripts, Australian Society of Archivists Inc. Access:

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01576895.2012.687129?scroll=top&needAccess=true>

close your eyes. Listen deeply. Feel the earth move around you. Notice the sounds and smells of life. When you're ready, open your eyes and respond to the prompts... Ponder, write, or draw what comes up. Consider drawing your journey to this place, at this time in your life; what are you here to learn, unlearn and connect to for your future?

Who am I?

Where am I?

How did I get Here?

What do I know of this place?

How deep are my stories here?

What does this Place know of Me?

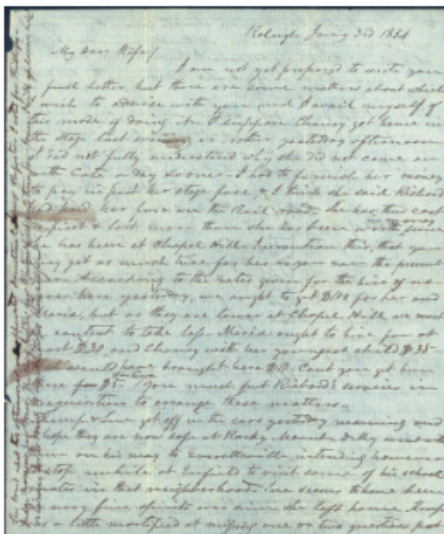
How am I part of this Indigenous land's story?

➤ **Activity 2 - History, re-memory, and living feelings**

Did you know that the UNC Chapel Hill archives hold many documents that show the ingrained history of slavery which build this university? One such letter, between W.H Battle and his wife Lucy, speaks to the quotidian nature of slavery at this time. Read the excerpt from this letter speaking candidly about the decision to rent an enslaved woman, Chaney, and her daughter for economic gain. Consider the fact that this document was produced in Chapel Hill about 150 years ago, or around 6 generations ago. This document was recorded, kept, and placed in the archives meaning someone, at some point, wanted to guard this as history.⁴

If we consider history as a plural reality made up of many stories recorded and omitted, informed by and through interpersonal relations and structures, then we can read this two-dimensional letter, and with curious inquiry, consider, *who is speaking in this letter* and so importantly, *who is spoken for?* In other words, who is this history about, and who is this history obscuring? What can we imagine of the full lives - the fears, grief, love, and joys behind the name we know, Chaney, and her youngest child's name that we do not know? How does she live?

⁴ Access the full document via UNC Digital Archives.
https://exhibits.lib.unc.edu/exhibits/show/slavery/slaves_bought_sold_exchanged_h



3 January 1854. William H. Battle to Lucy Battle.

W. H. Battle writes home to wife Lucy to discuss the hiring out of slaves. Battle laments the lower rates of Chapel Hill when compared with Raleigh and writes that they "must be content to take less." He goes on to complain about paying Chaney's stage fare back to Chapel Hill and writes that "she has thus cost us first & last more than she has been worth in money." He advises his wife to "get as much hire for her" as she can for the present year and estimates that Chaney can be hired out along with her youngest child for thirty-five dollars.

"... we ought to get \$100 for her [Cate] and Maria, but as they are lower at Chapel Hill we must be content to take less."

(connect to finding aid #3223)

Read this letter and consider the enslaved woman Chaney and her youngest child, who are behind these words. Reflect and journal on the below;

- What does this moment (the rental of her life and labor) mean for *Chaney and her child*?
- What is her life like?
- What brought her to this moment? Can you imagine what she may be feeling?
- How does she live? How does she love, rest and nourish herself and her children?
- What stories are left untold?
- How am I in this history? Where am I in relation to her and him?

Resources

Video: Why the Way We Tell Stories and Document History is a Social Justice Issue, [Danita Mason-Hogans](#), 2019. TEDxChapelHill

Article: The Indigenous Worldview Is Our Only Hope for Survival, [Four Arrows](#), 2019. [Truthout](#).

Academic paper: Re-Membering Our Own Power: Occaneechi Activism, Feminism, and Political Action Theories, Marshall Jeffries, 2015. Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies.

Article: The Future is Indigenous: Decolonizing Thanksgiving, Maile Arvin, 2016. Truthout.

Article: <https://www.dailytarheel.com/article/2019/09/unc-slave-wealth>

Situatedness: Land, Power & Wealth



“While it is important to document the nightmare of settler colonialism, it is also profoundly urgent to examine the deep radical consciousness of allied struggles that co-create liberated spaces and communities of freedom, past and present.”

- Nick Estes, A Kul Wicasa from the Lower Brule Sioux Tribe⁵

⁵ Nick Estes, 2020. Freedom is a place. <https://www.versopolis.com/times/reportage/842/freedom-is-a-place>

Grounding

‘Situatdness is the notion that our lived experiences formatively shape the way we see, interpret, and respond to the world around us.’ (Overend, 2022)⁶

No matter how your story became entwined with this land, one thing is for certain, your situatedness affects how you walk with the land; what you hear, feel, see, and know. That is to say, your sociocultural, historical, and geographic contexts inform your interconnections to this place, at this time. Undoubtedly they are linked to the past and connected to the future story. Knowing our situatedness supports us to see the boundaries of our knowing, and thus, provides new opportunities to move beyond these limitations. This requires deep listening.

The University of North Carolina is a land grab university; its wealth, prestige, and foundations were grown from the theft, dehumanization, attempted cultural genocide, and generations of harm inflicted on Indigenous peoples, predominately of the Saponi and Cherokee Nations. This process involved the inhumane domination and spiritual disruption of Indigenous lands, languages, and cultural ways of doing, knowing, and caring. This spiritual disruption continues to permeate Indigenous communities through cycles of intergenerational harm and the University of North Carolina is complicit in this ongoing process of covert violence, and will remain so until it begins to meaningfully listen to Indigenous and Black Communities and begin walking the paths of repair through Land Back, Reparations and Abolition. This process starts with listening to the land, to the community, and looking beyond the history we have been told. We may begin this process by reckoning with the questions, what does wealth look like? What is owed? What can never be repaid? And what could meaningful pathways towards Land Back look like?

Learning Invitation

➤ Activity 1 - Visualising Wealth

On a blank piece of paper, draw three interconnected circles. In the first, draw or write what wealth looks like from whiteness situatedness (ie. a hierarchical capitalist-drive system). In the second circle, draw or write what wealth looks like from an Indigenous or relational standpoint. Thirdly, draw or write what wealth looks like from your standpoint.

⁶ Overend, A. 2022. Situatedness. Open Library. <https://ecampusontario.pressbooks.pub/showingtheory/chapter/situatedness/#:~:text=Situatedness%20refers%20to%20the%20interconnectedness.and%20understanding%20of%20social%20contexts>.

Looking at these circles, can you notice crossovers? How do these three worldviews differ and connect? Consider the underlying mindsets (ie. scarcity or community) that operate within these different systems of wealth. Label each circle with the driving mindset and consider, what do we gain from each of these mindsets, and what do we lose?

Consider sharing this activity with a friend and comparing your responses. Together, consider what Wealth mindset the University of North Carolina is operating through? And, what wealth mindset could the University embrace to begin the process of Reparations and Land Back Abolition? What opportunities, threats, practices and systems might this new mindset create?

➤ **Activity 2 - Situatedness: The body is political.**

In her paper, Kynita Stringer-stanback shows how bodies are political through her personal story and ancestral connections to this place. She comments, *‘Every time a person chooses to speak against institutionalized racism, structural racism, and white supremacy, they run the risk of losing. What’s even worse is what would happen if we all stayed silent?’* (2019, p.326).

Consider this statement and reflect, what does silence look and feel like at UNC? How can we use our bodies as political entities, to support truth telling, Indigenous Land Back, abolition, reparations and Black liberation here at UNC? What role can we play in transforming the university culture of silence?

In her essay, Eula Bliss says, “Whiteness is not an identity, but a moral problem” (2015). What does this statement evoke in you? In what ways do you agree or disagree? What stories does this framing of whiteness as a moral problem allow us to see?

Our bodies are political. Informed by our situatedness, they can be sites of struggle and sites of liberation. Consider your body and how it is made political through your situatedness. In what ways does your body inform struggle, power, guilt, and liberation? How does your body resist and/or embrace the movement of Land Back Abolition?

As Estes highlights, ‘Freedom is a place’ (2022). How could we reach such a place at UNC? What tools, community processes, and systems would we need to create, abolish and/or transform to build such a reality?

Resources

Article: Kelley & Wright, 2020. Without Profit from Stolen Indigenous Lands, UNC would have gone broke 100 years ago.

<https://scalawagmagazine.org/2020/09/indian-land-university-profit/>

Academic article: Kynita stringer-stanback, 2019. From Slavery to College Loans, Library Trends Vol.68

No.2. Access: https://escholarship.org/content/qt4bs1c748/qt4bs1c748_noSplash_289aa6253aa09184bc8e65cf214147b5.pdf?t=qbroau

Article: Eula Biss, 2015. White Debt: Reckoning with what is owed - and what can never be repaid - for racial privilege. The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/06/magazine/white-debt.html>

Podcast: I am the Water: Grassy Narrows' Land Back Story, 2023. In the Mix podcast.

Listen:

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/14sG0dSHt8ouL9aq8Q5ukT?si=AgWw-E8FTFuw1TUYqyU2qg>

Article: Nick Estes, 2020. Freedom is a place -

<https://www.versopolis.com/times/reportage/842/freedom-is-a-place>

Silent Sam & tactics of control in public space



“Challenging the visible symbols of the Confederacy in public places is about questioning why in some places in this country we continue to celebrate and revere the leaders of the Confederate cause” (Szayna, Thomas, 2020)⁷

“The losing side gradually put up statues to the figures representing the cause that lost the Civil War as a way of symbolizing that the social order remained in line with the ideology of the Confederacy” (Szayna, Thomas, 2020).⁸

⁷ *Confederate Statues Symbolize Role of Racism in America* | Rand, www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2020/07/confederate-statues-symbolize-role-of-racism-in-america.html. Accessed 6 Dec. 2023.

⁸ *Confederate Statues Symbolize Role of Racism in America* | Rand, www.rand.org/pubs/commentary/2020/07/confederate-statues-symbolize-role-of-racism-in-america.html. Accessed 6 Dec. 2023.

Grounding

"Silent Sam," a prominent Confederate monument that once stood on the campus of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, serves as a potent symbol of the tactics of control in public spaces and their deep-rooted historical significance. The statue was erected in 1913 to honor UNC alumni who fought for the Confederacy during the American Civil War. Its presence on a university campus not only reflected the prevalent racial attitudes of the time but also exemplified a broader strategy of asserting dominance and control over public spaces.

The tactics of control in public spaces, as exemplified by monuments like Silent Sam, are often grounded in the manipulation of historical narratives to reinforce certain power structures. In the case of Confederate monuments, these structures perpetuated white supremacy and a revisionist history that downplayed the injustices of slavery. The erection of such monuments was not a neutral act; it was a deliberate attempt to shape the public memory and control the narrative surrounding the Civil War and its aftermath.

The topic is crucial as it speaks to the ongoing struggle over the interpretation of history and the public spaces we inhabit. The removal or retention of monuments like Silent Sam sparks debates about who gets to define the cultural and historical narrative. The public spaces we share are not neutral; they are contested arenas where power dynamics play out. Examining the tactics of control embodied in such monuments is a lens through which we can understand the historical context of these structures and their lasting impact on marginalized communities.

Moreover, the relevance of this topic extends beyond historical monuments. It encompasses broader questions about the nature of public spaces, whose stories are told, and whose voices are marginalized. Understanding and challenging these tactics of control is essential for fostering inclusive, equitable environments. It matters because the interpretation and representation of history in public spaces directly influence societal perceptions, attitudes, and, ultimately, the pursuit of justice and equality. The removal or recontextualization of monuments like Silent Sam becomes not just a physical act but a symbolic step toward reshaping a collective narrative that reflects a more accurate and inclusive understanding of our shared past.

Learning Invitation

- Themes that apply: **Think about how these are incredibly influential with public space**
 - a. Historical meaning
 - b. Territory
 - c. power & authority
 - d. social justice & activism
 - e. free speech & academic freedom

- f. public space & identity
- g. symbolism & representation
- Questions to ask yourself !
 - h. Who writes history?
 - i. Who controls memory-making in public discourse?
 - j. What are the tensions in singular history?

Resources:

Levin, Dan. "Toppled but Not Gone: U.N.C. Grapples Anew With the Fate of Silent Sam." The New York Times, 14 Feb. 2020,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/us/unc-silent-sam-statue-settlement.html>.

UNC History Department. "Statement on the Confederate Memorial." University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, <https://history.unc.edu/silent-sam/> .

PBS NewsHour. "America Wrestling with Confederate Monuments." PBS,
<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/america-wrestling-confederate-monuments> .

Intergenerational trauma/healing



Key quote from readings

“Our Ancestors knew that healing comes in cycles and circles. One generation carries the pain so that the next can live and heal. One cannot live without the other, each is the other's hope, meaning & strength.”⁹

“Native Americans have been subjected to traumas that have resulted in specific historical losses. These losses include loss of people, loss of land, and loss of family and culture”.

¹⁰

“Traumatic experiences cause traumatic stress, which disrupts homeostasis” in the body¹¹. People who have experienced traumatic events have higher rates than the general population for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and gastrointestinal disorders”¹².

Grounding

⁹ Gemma B. Benton, *Then She Sang A Willow Song: Reclaiming Life and Power with the Ancestors*

¹⁰ Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Garrett & Pichette, 2000; Whitbeck et al., 2004

¹¹ Solomon & Heide, 2005, p. 52

¹² (Kendall-Tackett, 2009)

The exploration of intergenerational trauma, particularly as it relates to land displacement and its implications on the “Land Back” movement and abolition, becomes incredibly useful. It provides a critical lens through which we can comprehend the enduring effects of historical injustices on contemporary populations who have been displaced from their ancestral lands.

In the context of “Land Back” movements, understanding intergenerational trauma is essential for grasping the deep-rooted consequences for individuals and communities. The psychological distress experienced by those who have been displaced resonates across generations, impacting the well-being, identity, and socio-economic conditions of those alive today. The trauma inflicted upon a community through land dispossession echoes through time, affecting not only the immediate generation but also setting the stage for ongoing challenges in subsequent generations.

This knowledge is indispensable for shaping policies and interventions that address the complex intersectionality of historical trauma, land rights, and the broader social and economic disparities. By acknowledging and comprehending intergenerational trauma, we can better appreciate the urgency of initiatives such as “Land Back” and abolition, recognizing them not only as contemporary social justice movements but as essential steps towards healing the deep-seated wounds that persist across generations.

Learning Invitation

- Aims/Takeaways:
 - a. Awareness and understanding: one primary aim is to raise awareness and promote a deeper understanding of intergenerational trauma
 - b. Breaking the cycle: break the cycle of intergenerational trauma which involved implementing strategies and interventions to prevent the transmission of trauma from one generation to the next
- Self-reflective questions or Activities to do to explore your own Intergenerational Experiences
 - c. Family Tree Exploration
 - d. Ancestral Letter:
 - i. express thoughts, feelings, questions to ancestors - this can be a powerful way to connect with the past and explore emotions tied to intergenerational trauma
 - e. Timeline of Significant Events
 - i. Develop a timeline of events that have affected your family, and how they might have shaped your family causing narratives passed down through generations
 - f. Identity mapping
 - i. Create a map of your identity, incorporating cultural, familial, and personal elements - explore how intergenerational trauma plays a role in

- shaping your identity
- g. Healing Rituals
 - i. Develop personal healing rituals or practices that connect to your cultural or familial roots - write about the emotions and reflections that arise during these rituals

Resources

Brown-Rice, Kathleen. "Examining the Theory of Historical Trauma Among Native Americans." *The Professional Counselor Journal*, Year, Page range. National Board for Certified Counselors, <https://tpcjournal.nbcc.org/examining>

Das, J. (Year, Month Day). Intergenerational Trauma Representation Around the Globe: Effects and Challenges. LinkedIn.
<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/intergenerational-trauma-representation-around-globe-effects-das/>

Meraaji, S. M., & Demby, G. (Hosts). (2018, June 6). What We Inherit. Code Switch. NPR. <https://www.npr.org/transcripts/617300356>

Decolonization



“Decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice.”¹³

“When we look at the word “de-colonization” it breaks down and questions where the origin of our practices and procedures came about.

¹³ Tuck and Yang (2012 p.21)

“Indigenization” is about bringing in an indigenous perspective and going forward with that knowledge of the current environment and considering what it means to be a good ancestor in training.”¹⁴

*“Decolonization starts inside of you. It is a lot about finding compassion and kindness, and less about anger and fear. We should remember that it begins with an internal process of healing and reconciliation. Once we find that peace, then we will be able to move forward and unify us as peoples. We must remember that we are all related. (Josué Rivas, Mexica)”*¹⁵

Grounding

Decolonization is an ongoing process which, like abolition, constitutes a creative reimagining of life beyond the oppressive systems of white supremacy. Here, Land Back is *essential* to begin healing the prolonged state of mourning experienced by Indigenous peoples whose land has and continues to be dispossessed for profit within the capitalist structures of white supremacy. Often, Decolonization can become stagnate in the quest to know the problems rather than start walking the solutions and becoming part of the process of unlearning. As Kanyon Sayers-Roods reminds, “Reindigenization” is an active process focused on the valuing and re-remembering process of Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, pedagogies and axiologies. In other words, the process of decolonization is more than disrupting colonial structures but more deeply about transforming the ways that we know, see, teach and do through Indigenous knowledges, that live in harmony with all living beings. Importantly, as land is kin for Indigenous peoples, the process of decolonization cannot exist without Land Back.

Learning Invitation

➤ Decolonization As Process:

What is the difference between being peoples on the land and peoples *of the land*? How does this distinction inform our current human reality, and indeed, our future?

¹⁴ Kanyon Sayers-Roods, *Costanoon Ohlone and Chumash*

¹⁵Yes! Magazine. (2018, March 26). Decolonization Starts Inside of You. Yes! Magazine.

<https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/decolonize/2018/03/26/decolonization-starts-inside-of-you> (Josué Rivas, Mexica/Otomi)

Truck and Yang highlight the tensions within academic spaces that regard decolonization as theory rather than practice and, in doing so, do not adequately address the root problem; hierarchies of whiteness, power, exclusion, universalism, and harm. Notably, they highlight, *“Settler moves to innocence are those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all.”* (p.10). What are Truck and Yang suggesting of the ways power can often be obscured in spaces of allyship? What can we learn from the distinction of decolonization as metaphor and decolonization as practice?

Find a calm place outside and stand amongst the vibrations of life. Breathe deep, allowing your mind to calm. Breathe deep, notice the sounds of life around you; the birds, the wind or perhaps the flurry of students. Breathe deep, be present. Once you are grounded, open your eyes and journal what comes up. Prompts to consider; In what ways am I connected to the web of life around me? How do I feel this connection or disconnection? In what ways do I honor my commitment to listening, learning and nurturing the stories of this land?

Resources

Podcast: Holding the Fire - Episode 10: Dismantling Destructive Narratives with Yuria Celidwen

<https://open.spotify.com/episode/32tHTzJaInnRMFhXoguk11?si=bGSupUC7SfSMmrNgGiJfrg>

Article: The Settler Colonial Present, 2020. On this Land, A Cultural Site.

<https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/the-settler-colonial-present/353674/on-this-land-a-cultural-site/>

Article: Rivas, 2018 - "Decolonization starts inside of you". Yes! Magazine.

[you"https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/decolonize/2018/03/26/decolonization-starts-inside-of-you](https://www.yesmagazine.org/issue/decolonize/2018/03/26/decolonization-starts-inside-of-you)

Academic Article: Truck & Yang 2012. Decolonization is not a metaphor. [Read here](#)

Podcast: Movement Memos - We can survive together by becoming Kin [Listen Here](#)

Deep listening for Repair & Relationality



“In Indigenous ways of knowing, we say that we know a thing when we know it not only with our physical senses, with our intellect but also when we engage our intuitive ways of knowing, of emotional knowledge and spiritual knowledge. And that’s really what I mean by listening, by saying that traditional knowledge engages us in listening. And what is the story that that being might share with us, if we know how to listen as well as we know how to see?”

- Robin Wall Kimmer, member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation¹⁶

¹⁶ On Being - The Intelligence of Plants with Robin Wall Kimmer, 2022.
<https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-wall-kimmerer-the-intelligence-of-plants-2022/>

Grounding

How long have you been here? How deep is your relationship with the trees of this campus? As Tianna Bruno reminds us, trees have memories, they feel pain and they hold stories of place. Therefore, at UNC ‘...the social impacts of slavery moved beyond the temporal and spatial bounds within which slavery was enacted. So, too, do the ecological impacts’¹⁷. On this campus, the trees hold memories because they witnessed the harm and grief of communities, while also holding the love and care. When our systems and institutional hierarchies work diligently to obscure, forget and maintain colonial power structures, what opportunities for remembering and repair do trees offer us?

Indeed, connecting to place and being committed to deeply listening to this land's stories, guides us to look up and learn from the wooden Elders that support the whole community at UNC. How often do we pause, look up and sink down, traveling the stories of love and loss to the root?

Learning Invitation

Amongst the trees, listening toward the root

Tianna Bruno’s article poetically invites us to re-remember the histories of slavery that trees bore witness too. Over the many generations that they have stood, these trees have been protectors of bodies and spirits, sites of violence and are memory keepers living in place. If we reflect on trees as sites of memories, then we can consider the many generations and societal changes that they have seen, felt and the stories that they hold. Find a tree across the campus and spend an hour *being with*. We invite you to lean against it, connecting to the vibrational rhythm of another living being. While you sit, ask the tree questions that arise; how old are you? How have you seen this world change? What do you remember of the ways you lived with Indigenous kin, before the whiteness system made you property and re-wrote your ways of living?

Repairing our connection

Walk across campus, without music and with intention; be present. Take time to notice each plant, each tree, each squirrel and bird that share this place and time with you. In your journey, find a living being - this could be a tree, a fallen leaf or a flowering bush - and breathe in rhythm with it. Listen deeply to its story. Notice its intricate patterns. Notice how it lives, at this time, in this place. Grab a medium that feels right and respond to the prompts..

I never noticed before...

We are similar because...

What does it feel like when...

Thank You for...

¹⁷ Bruno, 2022, p.3.

I apologize for....

Together, I hope...

When you are ready, give thanks to this living being for your moment of story sharing. Leave it with love and trust and continue your journey with peace and belonging.

Resources:

Video: Dadirri, Miriam-Rose Foundation, 2017.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tow2tR_ezL8&ab_channel=MiriamRoseFoundation

Podcast: On Being - The Intelligence of Plants with Robin Wall Kimmer, 2022.

<https://onbeing.org/programs/robin-wall-kimmerer-the-intelligence-of-plants-2022/>

Academic article: Tianna Bruno (2022): Ecological Memory in the Biophysical Afterlife of Slavery, *Annals of the American Association of Geographers*,

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/24694452.2022.2107985>

Article: Hayes, 2015. Our History and our dreams: Building Black and Native Solidarity, [Truthout](#)

Racial Capitalism

Key Words:

politics, capitalism, colonialism, systemic power & injustice

“...capitalism emerged within the feudal order and flowered in the cultural soil of a Western civilization already thoroughly infused with racialism. Capitalism and racism, in other words, did not break from the old order but rather evolved from it to produce a modern world system of ‘racial capitalism’ dependent on slavery, violence, imperialism, and genocide. Capitalism was ‘racial’ not because of some conspiracy to divide workers or justify slavery and dispossession, but because racialism had already permeated Western feudal society.”¹⁸



Above: Cedric Robinson, a political activist and scholar in the late 20th century, adopted the term ‘racial capitalism’ in his book *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition*.

Grounding:

In expanding our knowledge of *racial capitalism*, we explore what it means for capitalism to be racial or racist, and examine how systemic racism & capitalism are inherently intertwined and reinforce each other. Further, we can begin to understand how racial capitalism interferes with a multitude of areas, including healthcare, incarceration, housing, agriculture, urban governance, & the environment.

¹⁸ Boston Review, “What Did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism? - Boston Review,” November 14, 2022, <https://www.bostonreview.net/articles/robin-d-g-kelley-introduction-race-capitalism-justice/>.

Learning Invitation

- Can capitalism exist without racist systems in place?
- What may life look like beyond systems of capital?

Resources:

Article in the Boston Review (2017) by Robin D.G. Kelley: [What did Cedric Robinson Mean by Racial Capitalism?](#)

Journal Article (2022) specifically sections “Coalescing Conversations, Defining racial Capitalism” & “Studying Cityscapes Through a Racial Capitalism Lens”: [What Does Racial Capitalism Have to Do With Cities and Communities?](#)

Video, 17 min (2019): [Black Ghettos & State Sponsored Racism](#)

Environmental Justice & Environmental Racism

Key words:

environmentalism, social justice, land as power, climate justice, redlining, gentrification, de facto segregation

Grounding:

The EPA first adopted the term *environmental justice* in the late 1990s after pressure from grassroots activists that wanted a broader, more inclusive term to describe their environmentalism movements.¹⁹ They officially define environmental justice as a goal of ensuring that “all people... are protected from disproportionate impacts of environmental hazards.” Further, they describe “environmental justice communities” as being classified by minority, low-income populations that are subjected to environmental hazards, as well as excluded from environmental policies.

Correspondingly, *environmental racism* is classified as “the persistent inequitable distribution of pollution and other environmental burdens” on minority, low-income, and historically marginalized communities.²⁰ The term was first used in the 1980s by Dr. Benjamin Chavis, who was protesting the placement of a toxic waste dump in Warren County, NC – a community that at the time held the highest percentage of Black residents out of all counties in NC.²¹



However, despite the EPA’s acknowledgement of environmental justice issues, there are no laws or regulations in place to address growing concerns.²² This means that agencies such as the EPA have no authority to contest cases of environmental racism or implement strategies for change. Environmental justice scholars argue that in order for truly effective changes to be made that address the widespread severity of the issue, much reform must be made.

¹⁹ Ryan Holifield, “DEFINING ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM,” *Urban Geography* 22, no. 1 (February 1, 2001): 78–90, <https://doi.org/10.2747/0272-3638.22.1.78>.

²⁰ Hannah Perls, “EPA Undermines Its Own Environmental Justice Programs - Harvard Law School,” *Harvard Law School - Environmental & Energy Law Program* (blog), September 16, 2022, <https://eelp.law.harvard.edu/2020/11/epa-undermines-its-own-environmental-justice-programs/>.

²¹ Sanford School of Public Policy, “Amplifying Stories of Environmental Racism, Resistance in North Carolina,” September 23, 2023, <https://sanford.duke.edu/story/amplifying-stories-environmental-racism-resistance-north-carolina/#:~:text=Dr.-,Benjamin%20E.,in%20Warren%20County%3A%20environmental%20racism>.

²² Perls, “EPA Undermines Its Own Environmental Justice Programs - Harvard Law School.”

Key explanation:

Through these readings and videos, we will discern how poorer, disempowered, and minority communities may be impacted by environmental crises and disasters more than whiter, richer communities. In doing so, we will consider multiple “case studies” of environmental racism in the U.S. & how the concerns of these communities have been ignored or denied. In bringing our own awareness to this concept, we may discern how white supremacy utilizes land as a source of power and control, as well as recognize the “slow violence” that ensues as a result of environmental racism.

Learning Invitation

- What constitutes an environmental disaster as environmental racism? How might activists, scholars, and governmental agencies define this term differently?
- What are the consequences that environmental crises have on the communities that you read about?
- How do environmental justice movements work to combat this racism?

Resources:

Interview by “Climate Break” with Dr. Robert Bullard: [on Environmental Justice & Environmental Racism](#)

Articles in the Boston Review, Examples of Environmental Racism in Cities in the U.S: [Centreville, IL](#) (Johnson, 2020) & [Tallevast, FL](#) (Manigault-Bryant, 2021)

Video, 7 min from the Atlantic (2018): [Man Killing Jobs & Environmental Racism](#)

New York Times Article by Brad Plumer and Nadja Popovich (2020): [How Decades of Racist Housing Policy Left Neighborhoods Sweltering](#)



★ Flooding is a common occurrence in Centreville, IL, a majority Black town.

Further Readings:

Progress Report (2001): [Defining Environmental Justice & Environmental Racism](#)

Article in Brookings (2023): [The US can't achieve environmental justice through one-size-fits-all climate policy](#)

Federal Policy Analysis from EELP Harvard (2020): [EPA Undermines Its Own Environmental Justice Programs](#)