Māori-Migrant solidarities in resisting white supremacy (Community version)[1]

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CARE

CENTRE FOR CULTURE-CENTRED APPROACH
TO RESEARCH AND EVALUATION

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28 July 2023
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ABOUT CARE

The Center for Culture-centered Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE) at Massey University, Aotearoa New Zealand, is a global hub for communication research that uses participatory and culture-centered methodologies to develop community-driven communication solutions to health and wellbeing. Through experiments in methods of radical democracy anchored in community ownership and community voice, the Center collaborates with communities, community organizers, community researchers, advocates, and activists to imagine and develop sustainable practices for prevention, health care organizing, food and agriculture, worker organizing, migrant and refugee rights, indigenous rights, rights of the poor, and economic transformation.

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[1] For the full academic version please see this link: CARE White Paper Issue #18: Māori-Migrant solidarities in resisting white supremacy

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White supremacy is the belief that the white race is naturally and inherently superior, and therefore should dominate other races. This belief underlies colonialism in Aotearoa New Zealand. White supremacy originates from whiteness, the idea that the values of white culture are universally desirable. In this paper, we argue that the racist violence of white supremacy targeting tangata whenua in Aotearoa is a part of the violence of the colonial project and forms the basis of the hate directed toward ethnic migrant communities here. We suggest that recognising the driving force of white supremacy as colonialism forms the bedrock of connection between tangata whenua and ethnic migrant communities, offering solidarity as the basis for building resistance to white supremacy.

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Māori-Migrant solidarities in resisting white supremacy

History of white supremacy in Aotearoa

In the years leading up to the dispatch of James Cook to Te Moananui a Kiwa in pursuit of "The Great Southern Continent", Cook had been stationed during the Seven Year War on Mohawk waters, in the region today known as Canada, within the Gulf of St Lawrence and the St Lawrence river. The Seven Year War itself was a product of European imperial expansion into Great Turtle Island by both French and English military forces, vying for colonial entitlements falsely granted under the Doctrine of Discovery. Whilst there, Cook was mentored by Field Marshall Jeffrey Amherst, who advocated for brutal acts of warfare against Indigenous groups including deliberate infection with smallpox, and the "conquistador" method of training dogs to specifically identify, attack and eat Indigenous peoples. This is important to note because it reminds us that colonialism was a global project, and it sets the context of the European colonial mindset as it turned its gaze in the direction of Aotearoa. Once here, Cook carried out numerous claims of discovery, and this, in addition to the lives taken and conscious spread of infection, are representations of the license to extinguish native land and human rights that are granted through the doctrine of discovery.

When we consider where colonizers believe they have the right to take away people's land and human rights, we can look to the fact that even by the time Cook arrived here in 1769, the belief that Europeans had a superior claim to non-white lands and the peoples of those lands had been embedded in European minds for over three centuries. It had by then moved from being laws granted by the Vatican to being a part of the everyday European mindset. European intellectuals had taken these ideas and developed them into social philosophies and scientific theories, and what we see over this time is a shift from colonial violence being justified by colonial religion, to colonialism being justified by colonial science, and colonial intellect. This normalising of Indigenous dispossession in the European mind helps us to understand how historical figures like Edward Gibbon Wakefield could create a market out of stolen Māori land, and also helps to explain the settler scramble for Māori land that followed.

When the British parliament passed the 1852 New Zealand Constitution Act, establishing a settler colonial government, it did so on the false grounds that Māori had ceded sovereignty through the signing of Te Tiriti, and on the false grounds that Cook "discovered" Te Waipounamu. Once the settler government was in place, it continued to operate with the mindset of the doctrine of discovery, and this helps to explain its continued violation of Te Tiriti o Waitangi over the years.

Migration and white supremacy

Historically, colonialism has shaped the making of borders and the movements of people across borders through forced displacements and slavery. The colonial violence of white supremacy has historically removed people from their land, livelihoods, and spaces of everyday living, using imposed colonial ideas and laws around citizenship and democracy to deny people the right to stay safe in their own lands. One way in which this is demonstrated is the transnational alliance known as the "Core Anglosphere", a relationship between the United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. This relationship, founded in colonial imperialism and maintained through the legacy of English language domination, influences immigration, information sharing and military policy across those same nations. This same alliance holds significant power within trans-national forums like the United Nations Security Council and the World Trade Organisation, shaping accepted norms within global governance.

"(The core anglosphere) has been the architect and a staunch proponent of international norms. The intergovernmental organisation is one of the Anglosphere's lasting gifts to the world. The United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the International Atomic Energy Agency and other multilateral international strategic functions owe their existence to the emergence of global governance. While membership of those bodies extends well beyond the English-speaking world, the Anglosphere has incubated and hatched the institutional norms and philosophies that continue to dominate the international political economy."[2]
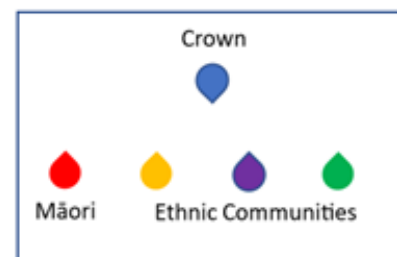
Throughout the 19th century, international financial institutions such as the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), capitalised upon the impoverishment created by colonialism, through setting up debt programmes which ushered in further economic exploitation by multi-national corporations. In this way, the classic white supremacist colonialism of previous centuries simply shifted form to neo-colonialism, facilitated by international financial bodies and corporate empires. Examples of this can be seen in U.S. led genocides in Indonesia, Nicaragua, Haiti and Chile - all of which were carried out upon a background of economic desperation created through "free market economics" in service of the global economy, and all of which were couched in the rhetoric of "democratic restoration" by the U.S. and allies. These economic tools of empire have led to people being displaced from their homes and forced into the role of the migrant laborer - a role that is typically under-valued, under-supported and often oppressed. Again, the domination of English functions to maintain colonial privilege, as it is primarily non-English speaking lands who undergo this process, and English as a spoken language opens and closes doors of opportunity and justice in spaces of immigration and migrant labour.

Multiculturalism and whiteness

The underpinning logic of colonial government is one of white supremacy, where whiteness is centered and normalised beyond being a "part of the furniture" to being the house itself, and non-white ethnicities are marginalised as cultural ornaments. In a Crown structure, multiculturalism largely exists as permission to express ones ethnic culture against a white backdrop. The Crown will then argue that it is meeting the standards of diversity, inclusion and equity, all while ignoring the whiteness of ultimate authority, control of resourcing and being the "normalised backdrop" to everything. In reducing non-white voices to cultural expressions, the political voice of ethnic communities is marginalised, while the political authority of Māori as a Treaty partner is undermined. When the Crown ignores its own whiteness and places itself as the authority and backdrop, with everyone else as the performative "other", it creates confusion and tension between Māori, who have a specific treaty relationship with the Crown, and migrant groups, who have arrived to Aotearoa by virtue of the Māori-Crown treaty relationship.

White fragility and white fear

"White fragility" and fear exist in a paradox, where whiteness is so accustomed to privilege that it is hypersensitive to any kind of critique, whilst also acting upon that hypersensitivity with extreme violence, or an immediate weaponising of that privilege. White supremacy produces and circulates fear, operating on a myth of white/colonial systems and spaces (constructed as naturally "safe") being taken over by black/brown masses (constructed as naturally "dangerous"). As a part of this process, colonial society erases its own actual and threatened white violence, such as the lack of consequences for white supremacist harassment; demonstrations of colonial military might; hyper-surveillance and over-policing of marginalised migrant and Indigenous communities. The narrative of white fear forms the basis of the great replacement theory, a core ideology of the global white supremacist movement.

Crown-constructed multiculturalism

Multiculturalism within a Tiriti context
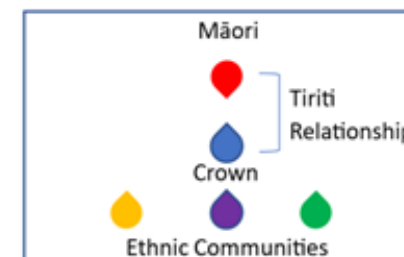
It is also important to white supremacy that whiteness remains in the background as the assumed foundation of society. By staying in the background, the racist blind spots in the system towards its own harmfulness are able to remain, and the colonial government gets to retain its role as "society's kind protector". This goes some way to explaining how the mere mention of whiteness (ie bringing whiteness to the foreground) provokes violent and abusive responses. Consider here the recent targeted attacks directed at the Minister of Violence Prevention, Hon. Marama Davidson, organised around her comment when accosted by a far-right platform at an anti-transgender event, referring to white cis-men as the drivers of violence.

White supremacy and divide-and-rule

Divide-and-rule, dividing colonized peoples to govern them, is a powerful tool of colonial management. The white supremacy of the colonial project targets Māori and migrant communities alike, to produce fear. Migrants are fed the colonial lie that honoring Te Tiriti somehow depletes migrant rights, denying the role of Te Tiriti as the basis for migrant belonging in Aotearoa. Similarly, Māori communities, already marginalised by colonialism, are targeted by far-right anti-migrant forces, who frame migrants as the threat to economic opportunities for Māori. Consider here the ways in which the racist trope around Māori as dangerous are organised in the context

of the thefts at dairy shops that are largely owned by Indian migrants, and the equally racist trope that migrant groups are responsible for diminished access to employment and social housing. Such ideas exploit Māori anxiety regarding colonial invasion and re-direct it towards protecting a nationalist idea of New Zealand as a blissful colonized, and predominantly white, nation. While they each have distinct aspects to them, when we look at it through an anti-colonial lens, Māori and migrant communities have far more in common than that which divides.

Digital infrastructures of white supremacy

Social media has played a huge role in the globalisation of white supremacy. For these digital platforms, all participation is a commodity that can be given value and traded. Racist hate and fear-based content in particular holds strong value because it generates strong responses and high participation. In much the same way as the colonial project has weaponised its own idea of democracy, so too has online white supremacy functioned to undermine just democratic processes, through the erasure of Indigenous, Black and Brown voices, and the permitting of racist harassment and hate, particularly towards marginalised communities, for the sake of profit. A powerful example of this is set by the way in which disinformation plays out in Aotearoa New Zealand, where Māori, migrant (particularly Muslim migrants), Pasifika , and transgender communities, are all routinely attacked, and often framed as threats to democracy.

spaces and infrastructures would somehow reduce the global appeal of organisations. Similarly, Māori communities, marginalised by settler colonial practices of dispossession, are targeted by far-right anti-migrant forces, particularly targeting ethnic migrants and constructing migrants as threats to economic opportunities for Māori. Consider here the ways in which the racist trope around Māori as dangerous are organised in the context of the thefts at dairy shops that are largely owned by Indian migrants, and the equally racist trope that migrant groups are responsible for diminished access to employment and social housing, triggering Māori trauma of colonial invasion and re-orienting it towards nationalist xenophobic agendas. Similarly, organisations reproduce this divide-and-rule strategy, performatively positioning biculturalism as the basis for downplaying the systemic racism experienced by ethnic migrant communities or deploying the language of biculturalism to reproduce inequities within organisations that marginalise ethnic migrants. We note that this is fueled by a superficial approach to Te Tiriti and the values espoused therein. In the white supremacist ecosystem, ethnic migrants standing in solidarity with Māori in resisting white supremacy are targeted, framed as outsiders bringing in radical agendas from outside to divide and erode society. The society white supremacists believe is being eroded presents a nationalist view of the New Zealand state, depicting the intersections of xenophobia, anti-blackness and colonial racism. Within an anti-

Strategies for resisting white supremacy

Strategies for resisting white supremacy Because white supremacy is by its very nature global, strategies of resistance to white supremacy must include efforts to build an alliance network of locally situated, and locally relevant movements. In the face of such longstanding, protected, and well-resourced large-scale colonial violence, the continued activism of Indigenous, migrant, and local communities across the Global South are a testament to strength and endurance. Nurturing these relationships at local, domestic, regional and transnational levels provides the basis for responding to the multi-levelled threat of white supremacy. This includes internal education work within our relative communities to grow mutual understanding and solidarity; developing independent mechanisms for information sharing between marginalised communities which highlight key actors, tactics, financial networks and critical relationships within global white supremacist movements; and extends to physical acts of solidarity between marginalised communities during political actions.

Centering Te Tiriti

Te Tiriti o Waitangi is a foundational document of Aotearoa-New Zealand. At its time of signing, it was envisaged by tipuna Māori signatories as a tool to limit the impact of white entitlement on their lands and waters.

We argue that it still holds the potential to limit white supremacy and its impacts today He Whakaputanga o te Rangatiratanga o Nu Tirene: the Declaration of Independence of the United Tribes of New Zealand together with Te Tiriti o Waitangi are the first immigration documents of Aotearoa. Te Tiriti o Waitangi in particular is the source of non-Māori rights within Aotearoa, and sets the standards by which Non-Māori may call Aotearoa home.

In considering what it is to be Tiriti centered, we can look again to the findings of the Paparahi Ki Te Raki Stage One report which clearly outlines the expectations of rangatira signatories to Te Tiriti:

"(T)he rangatira understood kāwanatanga primarily as the power to control settlers and thereby keep the peace and protect Māori interests accordingly; that rangatira would retain their independence and authority as rangatira, and would be the Governor's equal ; that land transactions would be regulated in some way ; that the Crown would enforce the Māori understanding of pre-treaty land transactions, and therefore return land that settlers had not properly acquired ; and that it may also have involved protection of New Zealand from foreign powers. We think that few if any rangatira would have envisaged the Governor having authority to intervene in internal Māori affairs – though many would have realised that where the populations intermingled questions of relative authority would need to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis, as was typical for rangatira-to-rangatira relationships."[3]

If these were indeed the expectations of the Tiriti signatories, then we can draw from that some standards of what Tiriti-centered solidarity look like: Land back; Independent authority of rangatira Māori over Te Ao Māori; Protection of Māori from foreign threat; Shared power over matters that impact upon Māori and tauiwi.

Contemporary reflections upon the role of Te Tiriti in relation to immigration policy can be found within the Matike Mai Aotearoa Report on Constitutional Transformation

"When we say 'he aha te mea nui' we don't just mean us or the Pākehā who've been here for generations. It's everyone and that's what Te Tiriti allows for…that we now have this multicultural place but it all began in the treaty and the relationship that's meant to exist between us and the Crown".

"It's just tikanga to recognise the relationship with Tangata Tiriti even if they haven't always recognised us…that's a really important value but it needs the same manaaki that our people tried to show to the first Pākehā".[4]

The discussions about how Te Tiriti valued and embraced everyone in the community were also about the need to ensure that all peoples could fully participate in political affairs.

Centering Kaupapa Māori in resistance

Centering Kaupapa Māori in resistance calls upon principles of justness. Rather than building resistance movements around narrow, self-centered concepts of "How does this movement benefit the people I represent?" it suggests the continual centering of erased and marginalised voices. Amidst the global rise of individual self-interest, tikanga of aroha, manaakitanga, tika and pono, drawn from Kaupapa Māori turn movements toward the other to work through dialogues with integrity, dignity, and respect for each other's stories. In drawing from Te Ao Māori centered principles, it's vital that we resist the urge to extract from Te Ao Māori in ways that are superficial, or that nurture white comfort. Solidarity must be benchmarked by understanding, respecting, and supporting political kaupapa as defined by Te Ao Māori. This extends to support for land-back movements, Tiriti-centered constitutional transformation, and Indigenous-led climate justice movements.

Challenging ourselves

Living under white supremacy for multiple generations can lead to the internalising of racist ideas, and these ideas can in turn be acted out against our own, or each other's marginalised communities. In acknowledging this dynamic of internal, or later racism, we argue that it is crucial for us to reflect upon how white supremacy and colonialism can operate through marginalised groups, in order to avoid replicating the harm of colonial oppressors. For ethnic migrant communities, it is vital to look beyond shallow, performative approaches that reduce engagement with Te Ao Māori

to a marae visit or a karakia at the start of a gathering and extend to the mutual interests of opposing far-right movements within our worlds. One example of this is the way in which Hindutva groups within Aotearoa have focused upon Māori cultural traditions as a bridge between cultures, upon which is loaded harmful far-right ideas of supremacy, persecution and exclusion. In understanding the far-right underpinnings of Hindutva, solidarity can then be built with migrant communities upon the shared concerns of far-right harm and cultural co-option when applied to Māori and South-Asian migrant communities alike.

Building and sustaining economies of care

The colonial project is, at it's heart, one of economic greed. The growth and spread of capitalism has been a feature of the European application of the Doctrine of Discovery. Indigenous and local communities across the Global South, which have been targeted by colonial capitalism, are also pushing back through establishing alternative economies based on customary practices, and principles of care for people and place. Whereas capitalism extracts from and exploits people and place, making communities pay for the costs of environmental and human damage for their products, alternative economies are local and centered in the community, therefore increasing accountability and good practice. In Aotearoa for instance, the organising of Māori communities around aroha and manaakitanga sustained and nurtured everyday life amidst crises such as the pandemic and the floods of 2023.

In Telengana, South India, the organising of dalit (oppressed caste) landless women farmers into sanghams (cooperatives) sustains practices of community-based seed banks and seed sharing organised around principles of care. Where capitalist economies treat the environment as collateral damage in the greater interest of access to supply, these local Indigenous economies are able to provide for the environment as well as humans. For this reason, communities have not only withstood the aftermath of natural disasters and provided for each other, but have also protected the vast majority of the planets remaining biodiversity and carbon sinks, facts which bear considerable relevance as the world is increasingly forced to reconsider what kind of global economy will provide an inhabitable planet for future generations.

Sovereign voices and strategies of communication

In a world where non-white voices are consistently erased and minimised, impacting upon non-white participation in systems of knowledge generation like research and publishing, it is vital that we exercise sovereignty of voice and communication through owning our own stories, and the infrastructures which carry our stories. When we center our own cultures in our movements for change, this includes whose voices are included, which audiences are addressed, how voices are collected, carried and/or amplified. This work is vital for growing mutual understanding of

where we are similar, and where we differ, in order to build effective movements of solidarity against white supremacy.

Building transnational solidarities

Whiteness works through the myth of separation and is largely focused on maintaining its privilege within a global system of white oppression, relying heavily on the fiction that maintaining these systems is in the national interest. Such narrow considerations of national interest, embedded within colonial-capitalist forces, undermine Indigenous, non-white, labour, migrant and environmental rights alike. International relations based on national interest draw colonial forces together, organising themselves in racist alliances surrounding security, intelligence, data gathering, and militarism. Note here the participation of Aotearoa in the increase of military sites and assets across the Pacific and Aotearoa, New Zealand military participation in RIMPAC wargames, and ongoing moves towards New Zealand membership in the AUKUS military alliance. Such activities and relationships significantly increased risk to Indigenous and local communities across the Pacific whilst also increasing New Zealand's complicities in a neo-colonial alliance of military might which continues to drive the unjust movement of peoples around the globe.

Being anti-colonial in this space demands an awareness of other projects of colonial and fascist harm such as Hindutva in India; Israeli occupation of

of Palestine; phosphate extraction in Western Sahara and Indonesian occupation of West Papua. It further calls for us to consider how these matters relate to Aotearoa through our economy, politics or immigration. Critical to enhanced relationships of solidarity is the need to deeply wānanga our relative histories of colonial oppression, in order to understand and respect where migrant/Māori pathways converge and diverge. This was exampled by the strong response of Māori and Pasifika communities in Aotearoa to the Black Lives Matter movement whilst also demonstrating entitlements to Black popular culture, and still allowing for anti-black racism within Māori and Pasifika communities. Understanding our distinct experiences at hands of white supremacy is critical to moving past superficial expressions of solidarity that can dangerously stray into entitlement.

Conclusion

We cannot wait for the colonial machine to provide our spaces of solidarity and allyship. An anti-racist framework calls us to learn about each other's struggles, respect our differences and weave together our connections with people and communities. We recognise and celebrate the existing histories of transnational solidarities among anti-colonial, Black, Indigenous, and migrant rights. These solidarities and alliances are erased by white structures such as the United Nations who assume the right and responsibility to regulate border issues and shared spaces. The potential of Indigenous-migrant solidarity is great, with Indigenous populations and migrant populations collectively accounting for 781 million people worldwide.

References

1 For the full academic version please see this link: CARE White Paper Issue #18: Māori-Migrant solidarities in resisting white supremacy.

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