Violence, Colonialism, and Space: Towards a Decolonizing Dialogue

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Abstract

Broadly taking up themes of violence and colonialism, this paper was first presented as a roundtable at the *Decolonizing Cascadias?: 2013 Critical Geographies Mini Conference* at the University of British Columbia. Framed as a roundtable conversation among the three authors, the paper critically examines the material and ideological relations through which certain types of violence are made invisible in the context of ongoing colonialism in white settler society. In dialogue across their various academic, activist and personal experiences, the authors argue for a critical decolonizing geography of violence that examines how spaces and subjects are constructed relationally through social, material and legal processes of racial violence and its gendered and sexualized politics. How do certain forms of violence come to be naturalized within civilizing and modernizing discourse, such that the violence of development or colonialism come to be erased? How do some lives become constructed as inherently violent in order to deny the violence against them? Disrupting and examining the settler colonial thinking and practices that persist within diverse social movements and academic disciplines, including geography, the dialogue explores who has the authority to name what forms of violence are seen as legitimate. As activist-scholars engaged in knowledge production and legitimization, the authors are interested in envisioning new possibilities for how they understand violence and resistance, particularly by centering Indigenous ontologies and by naming lived realities which are not accounted for in dominant discourses of violence and colonialism.

Introduction

In the opening moments of the *Decolonizing Cascadia?: 2013 Critical Geographies Mini Conference*, Musqueam elder Larry Grant took the floor to welcome us to his ancestors' territories on which the University of British Columbia is now situated. In his opening remarks, Larry shared stories of Musqueam territorial knowledge that grounded our decolonizing discussions of critical geographic research in the days that followed.

On the second day of the conference, we – Amy, Cindy and Sarah – met in a small classroom to share our work in a roundtable discussion on themes of violence, colonialism and space. We entered into this dialogue with the intention of fostering a critical engagement with the material and ideological relations through which certain types of violence are made invisible in the context of ongoing colonialism in white settler societies, as well as investigating anti-violence and decolonial resistance. Each of us has worked in anti-violence education and advocacy in various capacities, and has extended this work in our academic research in geography. With Larry Grant's grounded reminder of the very ongoing and tangible nature of neo-colonial occupation of unceded lands at the forefront, we were left with challenging questions about the ways in which our anti-violence work connects with systemic, ongoing and direct violence upon the lands and bodies of Indigenous peoples. In settler countries like Canada and the United

States, how do we, as critical geographers, illuminate linkages between forms of state and interpersonal violence, violence fuelled by homophobia, racism, and xenophobia, and the foundational violence of colonialism that rests on Indigenous peoples dehumanization? Furthermore, how are various social spaces imagined and constructed in ways which perpetuate and naturalize diverse forms of colonial, racial, homophobic and gendered violence, such that they become difficult to name *as violence*? How do some lives become constructed as inherently violent in order to deny the violence against them? And importantly, power dynamics within diverse social movements and academic disciplines themselves, including geography, compel us to ask: who has the authority to name which forms of violence and knowledge are seen as legitimate?

In the pages that follow, we use a roundtable format to explore these questions using examples from our research and activist work. We aim to spark dialogue, both among us and within the discipline, about a critical decolonizing geography of violence that examines how spaces and subjects are constructed relationally through social, material and legal processes of racial violence and its gendered and sexualized politics. Our use of 'decolonizing' signals our desire to challenge the active nature of geographic knowledge in sustaining colonial relations and our observation that even geographies labeled as 'critical' often fail to adequately account for the history and present of colonial thinking in the production of violence. We offer here some examples from our work and the intersections between our projects in order to elucidate and to provoke. We draw out stories and experiences that help to shed some light on the colonial legacies and present violence in the U.S. and Canada. And as these pieces of our work reveal some often hidden aspects of violence in white settler societies, they simultaneously form the basis for the vital questions outlined above. In a sense, then, this roundtable discussion is a starting point. We aim not so much to lay out the details of our empirical cases, but rather to think through and across them - to demonstrate a basis for questions that we hope will fuel a broader dialogue in the discipline. We aim to challenge critical geographers to more deeply engage with colonialism in order to imagine and enact practices of scholarship and activism that resist it.

As a contribution to the diversity of ongoing decolonial activism and scholarship, we see this dialogue as a way to raise important questions about how critical geographers and the discipline of geography can more deeply engage with colonialism in order to imagine and enact decolonial practices. Due to the breadth of issues we draw on here, we see this as a venue for discussing complex questions related to violence, colonialism and space, acknowledging that we are unable to deeply and fully explore all the issues we raise. Indeed, we encourage readers to see our other publications, theses and the diverse decolonial work we reference for more in-depth investigations.

As mentioned, we are situated both as activists and scholars within community-based social movements and interdisciplinary academic contexts. As

such, we draw and build upon a rich history of Indigenous, feminist, critical race, and queer scholar-activism, which pushed forward theorizations of violence and power in vital ways (Hill Collins, 1990; Incite!, 2006; Jiwani, 2006; Lorde, 1984; Maracle, 1988; Mohanty, 1991; Monture-Angus, 1995; Razack, 1998, 2002; Ristock, 2002; Ristock and Timbang, 2005; Smith, 2005). As academics engaged in knowledge production and legitimization, we are interested in envisioning new possibilities for how geographers understand violence and resistance, particularly by naming lived realities which are not accounted for in dominant discourses of violence and colonialism. In this regard, we evoke J.K. Gibson-Graham (2008) in our discussion of the ways in which new worlds can be brought into being through the articulation of new or nonhegemonic systems of thought and how these articulations make them more real, more viable, more present in everyday life. We take up, in turn, a series of three questions and share our own work and thoughts on each. The questions were designed to create linkages between our academic, activist and personal understandings of violence, space and colonialism, and our responses therefore weave together these various voices and perspectives. Ultimately, taking Larry Grant's teachings and welcome to heart, we hope to deepen engagements with the ways in which people can and do challenge the complicity of white settler colonialism in various spaces.

Question 1: What is your entryway into these issues of violence, colonialism and space? What is the case study in your research?

Sarah: My work on violence began in 1994, during the first year of my undergrad when a cousin my age took her own life. As a result of her death, other women in my family began talking about the abuse they suffered at the hands of a powerful man in our community. Before her death, my cousin spoke of her abuse but no action was taken to confront the offender. As a Kwagiulth (Kwakwaka'wakw) young woman, I felt a sense of responsibility to act as a witness to her story by not allowing her experience to go unheard, despite her death. I wanted to understand and honor my cousin's resistance, her attempts to speak out, as well as the forces that silenced her.

A few years later, I began looking at Indigenous women's involvement in street-level sex work, the extreme levels of violence they face, and the widespread legal indifference to this violence, particularly the many unsolved cases of murder in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. I was surprised at the lack of attention given to this issue by both Indigenous and feminist scholars, because the overrepresentation of Indigenous women in street-level sex work in Vancouver was so highly visible and widely acknowledged among community members. I started this work in the 1990s before the police recognized the large numbers of murders and disappearances in this neighborhood. Indigenous women and front-line workers in the Downtown Eastside were leading community mobilization efforts to remember women who had been killed or disappeared, and to advocate for police action. I think it's important to recognize the agency of Indigenous women in these

efforts, as we look at what has happened since the police formally acknowledged and investigated the deaths. It was only because women, mostly Indigenous women, in this neighborhood refused to be silent that the issue couldn't be ignored any longer.

Since then, I have conducted community-based research and education on issues related to violence in both urban and rural areas of BC. The reality that continues to drive my work is the widespread normalization of violence against Indigenous people. Wherever I go, the stories of violence are the same. In many communities, women have told me that everyone they know has faced violence of some kind. Although some of the violence is targeted specifically at girls and women, violence is faced by people of all genders and ages — Two-Spirit[3] people, elders, children, babies, teens, everyone. Further, this violence is normalized through slow, nonexistent or violent police responses, lack of public outcry, prevalent child apprehension and many other supposed responses to violence which themselves constitute violence.

Building on this community-based work, my doctoral research questioned the value of legal recognition of violence against Indigenous people, given that this recognition has failed to impact the normalization of this violence and has not seen a decrease in rates of interpersonal violence. I also investigated what Indigenous communities themselves are doing to address violence, given the inherently limited ability of colonial law to recognize violence against Indigenous people. The Canadian public now knows about the missing and murdered women from Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, Highway 16 in Northern BC (known as the Highway of Tears) and nationally (Pearce, 2013).). Additionally, marches are held each year in communities across Canada to commemorate the missing girls and women. Through widely publicized independent reviews and judicial inquiries, the Canadian public has also been made aware of the deaths of Indigenous children in government care (Hughes, 2006), and the deaths of people like Frank Paul, a homeless man who police officers dragged unconscious into an alley, where he died (Lewis, 2011). Media coverage of these issues has increased in tandem with the legal recognition of this violence. Yet, despite this legal recognition and public dialogue, the violence continues. So what is being achieved by this increased visibility? And what is being covered up or ignored in the process? As Amy and Cindy will describe when they introduce their own areas of research and activism, these questions of visibility and erasure are central to all of our anti-violence work.

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[3] At the 1990 Winnipeg gathering of the International Gathering of American Indian and First Nations Gays and Lesbians, 'Two-Spirit' was chosen as a term to move away from the anthropological term 'berdache' in describing Native queer identities and communities. Following this usage, and that of most recent Two-Spirit scholarship, we choose to capitalize this term. For more information, see Wesley Thomas and Sue-Ellen Jacobs (1991).

My research is also concerned with the pluralistic nature of Indigenous and Canadian legal regimes, and how Indigenous people and communities are negotiating our subjectivity in relation to both. If we're supposed to be able to turn to Canadian law when we face violence, yet law is itself a source of violence in our communities through the actions of individual legal actors (Comack, 2012; Hunt, 2014), how do we understand ourselves as legal subjects?

My research draws on a network of people who have become my colleagues — Indigenous people working in various capacities to address violence in communities across BC. I chose to interview this network of Indigenous professionals rather than Indigenous victims of violence (although many are both), out of an ethical concern with reproducing the very colonial power dynamics I am trying to dismantle. This choice also reflects an interest shared by Amy, Cindy and myself with understanding structural factors impacting violence prevention and intervention from the perspective of anti-violence practitioners. This approach allows me to develop a theoretical foundation grounded both in realities of violence as well as the agency and power of Indigenous people working to address this violence, ontologically shifting how I understand colonial violence itself. As an Indigenous academic, I have ethical responsibilities and raise methodological questions that are not addressed in institutional research ethics guidelines or Western geographic approaches, but rather emerge within my own set of relational responsibilities to the Indigenous communities with whom I am connected (for more on Indigenous research methodologies see Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008; Kovach; 2009). Many of the people I've interviewed work across regional, reserve, provincial and national borders, rather than having the jurisdictional restrictions of legal actors such as police, ministry social workers or provincial court judges. To me, this speaks to the mobility of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous people, as we work to address violence. Instead of sticking to pre-formed colonial categories (like focusing on a specific profession, town, region, etc.) it is the network of relationships and responsibilities, and the flow of knowledge, practices and resources among these networks that interests me.

Cindy: Although our research contexts are different, I have been interested in many similar questions about the relationship between the flow of knowledge, practices, relationships, responsibilities and networks emerging from my community-based and academic work about violence against women and in the lives of LGBTQ people. I've been exploring the relationship between the explanatory frameworks, hierarchical power relations and organizing strategies within feminist and queer anti-violence movements and the wider socio-spatial contexts of neoliberalism and ongoing white settler colonialism in Canada.

While these issues might appear to be primarily theoretical and political concerns, they emerged from a more personal place, as they did for Sarah. My activism and research interest about the realities of violence grew out of my desire to better understand my own experiences of violence in my first lesbian relationship in the 1980s, and more recently the homo/transphobic harassment and

threat of violence experienced by both my butch/genderqueer partner and our gender creative child. My work has been motivated by a desire to more deeply understand some of the persistent problems and tensions I experienced and observed in feminist and queer anti-violence movements I was part of, most specifically problems of white supremacist and settler colonial thinking, race-neutral analyses of gender and sexual violence, and neoliberalism. I also wanted to interrogate my own complicity as a white, middle-class, able-bodied and cisgender queer woman in perpetuating these practices and to explore strategies that would disrupt normative frameworks and strengthen practices of accountability and decolonization. Like Sarah and Amy, I have been concerned with exposing taken-for-granted assumptions within the official stories told and examining their consequences or effects — in my case, dominant feminist and queer anti-violence education and movement discourses.

My recent research looked at how we define, understand and construct violence in social movements that address the problem of violence in the lives of LGBTQ people, with an emphasis on community violence prevention programs that focus on intimate partner violence in queer women's relationships in British Columbia. Here I focused on the connections between violence, space, colonialism and discourse. I looked at three case studies that emerged from my community work and engaged in critical discourse analysis and autoethnographic approaches. I looked at a number of exclusions taking place within LGBTQ and feminist anti-violence movements — such as the exclusion of trans and working-class queer experiences of violence — but I focused specifically on racialized exclusions and the marginalization of LGBTQ people of colour and Indigenous people. My research reveals the persistent whiteness and racism within these anti-violence movements and the on-going exclusion of colonial and racial violence from our organizing frames. This includes the refusal to recognize white settler colonial violence as a pervasive and ongoing reality in Canada and one that conditions and shapes LGBTQ and feminist social movements. This is often accomplished through normalizing rhetorical strategies that naturalize the violence and the spaces within which it occurs.

As we discussed in the introduction, my approach has been inspired by the anti-colonial feminist and queer scholarship and activism of Indigenous women, feminists of color, low-income and poor women, and LGBTQ people, who have challenged the existing narrow definitions of gender-based violence (both intimate partner violence and sexual assault), as well as hate crimes, and the subsequent normative anti-violence organizing strategies and politics. They have argued that the established anti-violence frameworks that have dominated the feminist anti-violence movement have focused too narrowly on gender-based interpersonal violence in the private sphere of the heterosexual home and have lacked an analysis of the interlocking nature of gender, race, sexuality, class and disability — thereby ignoring the complex, diverse and multiple forms and contexts of violence (Holmes, 2009). Others have pointed out that many of the attempts to address these

theoretical and material exclusions have also been problematic for the way they have taken an additive approach that normalizes some experiences while marginalizing others. Frequently, certain forms of violence such as racist, colonial, or state violence, are conceptually erased or denied within dominant Western feminist frameworks, which have focused exclusively on interpersonal violence (Incite!, 2006; Monture-Angus, 1995). Additionally, the connections between violence conceptualized as 'hate-motivated' or 'bias-based' violence (such as racist and/or homo/transphobic violence) and 'sexual/domestic' violence are not usually made visible or integrated into the analysis and accompanying anti-violence strategies. Furthermore, the very public violence of racism, colonialism and nation building is normalized as something other than violence and thus erased or made invisible (Jiwani, 2006), which is similar to Sarah's analysis of the way systems of law and power render the violent nature of colonial relations invisible.

The critiques of these activists and scholars point to the importance of developing a complex and interlocking understanding of the simultaneous and multiple forms of violence taking place *within* and *against* marginalized communities, and addressing interpersonal, structural and state violence simultaneously (Incite!, 2006; Monture-Angus, 1995; Razack, 2002; Ristock and Timbang, 2005; Smith, 2005). A central theme evident — but not always explicit — in their work is the need to break down the discursive construction of public and private spaces. Although not necessarily articulated as such, in different ways they are calling for a spatial analysis of violence, one that pays attention to the violence enacted on bodies and communities at different sites, relational scales and from multiple sources (Holmes, 2009). A spatial analysis attends to the complex and relational processes by which violence on certain bodies, in certain spaces, becomes normalized or naturalized. Spaces are materially and symbolically created in such a way as to perpetuate racial violence (Razack, 2002).

Amy: My interest in violence issues and my investment in anti-violence struggles began with my desire, as an undergraduate student, to be in service to social and economic justice. As my politics and worldview were being radicalized in feminist, anti-racist classroom settings, I wanted also to learn from and to support those working to actively resist structures of power. Through a series of volunteer commitments and 50 plus hours of training, I entered the world of anti-domestic violence activism in Seattle. After a few months of working with a mainstream organization, I heard about Chaya, a non-profit organization in Seattle serving South Asian women and families in crisis, which provides both direct services for survivors of domestic violence, and engages in community mobilization and awareness-raising work.[4] I joined Chaya's Advocacy Committee

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[4] Chaya has now merged with the API Women and Family Safety Center, and the new organization — API Chaya — serves Asian, Pacific Islander, and South Asian communities in the greater Seattle area.

as a volunteer in 2003. In the Chaya community, I found not only shared passion for anti-violence and anti-oppression politics, but also an organizational valuing of active, open dialogue and accountability. While I have been welcomed and appreciated for my contributions, I have also been challenged and held accountable for how my privileges, beliefs and practices intersect with the organization's anti-oppression and empowerment work. As a white, class-privileged, U.S. born, non-Muslim person, I carry much privilege into these spaces of activism, and now research, and I will take up this aspect of our work together at API Chaya in more detail in the last section of this discussion. Over the past ten years, I have had several roles at (API) Chaya, including as an Advocacy Committee member; staffing the Helpline; compiling activist and academic sources on domestic violence in diverse South Asian American communities; coordinating other volunteers; assisting with administrative and fundraising work; and most recently, co-leading a community-based research project.

Through these varied experiences, I developed a deeper understanding of the complex lived realities of domestic violence, especially in immigrant communities and communities of color in the U.S. This work regularly demonstrates that there are complex, yet undeniable relationships between women's experiences of intimate violence and the structural, systemic and symbolic violence of colonialism, racism, capitalism, Islamophobia, homophobia, and interlocking systems of exploitation. Similarly to what Sarah and Cindy discussed, this 'on the ground' education was supplemented and complemented by my studies in feminist theory, especially women of color, Indigenous, transnational, and postcolonial feminist work. For me, the critical interventions of these scholars emphasize the importance of *situating* violence — in history and in place, but also at the intersections of multiple, interlocking systems of power and oppression.

In my current dissertation research, I am building on these lessons to examine how intimate gender violence is understood, narrated, and responded to in relation to ideas and projects of 'modernity,' as well as in relation to axes of difference and power. I am interested in how we can scale up and down in our analyses of power and violence to illuminate the ways in which forms of interpersonal violence are relationally produced together with forms of structural, systemic and state violence. My work also explores how practices and systems of violence at the scale of the nation-state often rely upon racialized and gendered representations of peoples, cultures and communities as violent 'by nature'. Parallels can be seen in Sarah's work with Indigenous communities, as racialized women's resistance and agency is frequently rendered invisible through representations that portray them as victims within an inherently violent nonwestern/'other' culture. In many such cases, naturalized representations of violent 'others' evoke and sensationalize examples of interpersonal violence and abuse to reinforce the stereotype (Abu Lughod, 2002; Narayan, 1997). Colonial technologies of rule are evident in how such representations (and the state and systemic violence they are made to justify and activate) produce and perpetuate narrow, highly problematic, understandings of

domestic violence as a problem of ignorance, poverty, culture, or all of these together.

My dissertation research approaches these questions at two sites: in the South Asian Muslim diaspora in Seattle, U.S.A., and in Muslim communities in Hyderabad, India. This project involves continued collaboration with API Chaya, and specifically with their Peaceful Families Taskforce (PFT), which works in diverse Seattle area Muslim communities. Building on my work with PFT's ongoing community-based study, my dissertation research explores how South Asian Muslim people living in the U.S. imagine and practice the production of peace within families, as well as how they think about and respond to domestic violence. In Hyderabad, I am also interviewing women associated with two non-profit organizations in order to engage with community-based narratives of domestic violence, as well as their creative strategies of resistance that include peace-building initiatives. Both in Seattle and in Hyderabad, I ask to what extent and how the marginalization of and violence against Muslim communities influences responses to domestic violence within those communities.

This question centralizes the significance of systemic and structural issues, as well as long-term, transformative change, by focusing on the prevention of violence and the mobilization of response to it. Learning from the perspective of an organization working primarily with immigrants, refugees, and communities of color, I understand the vital need to contextualize prevention and response within the multiple structures of power (including racism, Orientalism, white settler colonialism) that shape strategies of resistance. As I formed my research questions in conversation with colleagues at API Chaya, it seemed that the approach of interviewing victims about what they thought should change in the long term, or what created violence in the first place, actually maintained the onus on victims to 'end' the violence against themselves ('to just leave'). Whereas by looking at activism and interviewing folks doing that work, my project highlights the active resistance currently operating and how people embedded in this understand it and want to push it forward. At the same time, this focus suggests and investigates collective responsibility for violence (as opposed to individual or inter-personal responsibility) *and* emphasizes broader forms of violence and oppression within which collective responsibility is negotiated at the community level. In this, my approach parallels Sarah's, with a similar intention to subvert typical ways of understanding violence against women through victimization at the individual scale, the latter being a convenient way to remove the contexts and violence of colonialism from view.

For the purposes of this discussion with Sarah and Cindy, which centralizes the interstices of white settler colonialism and violence in a North American context, I am focusing in on my Seattle field site, rather than expanding on the varying contexts for asking these questions in Hyderabad. However, it is important to note that the kinds of discourses around Islam, Muslims, and violence that circulate *within* the U.S. obviously also cross beyond its borders. For example, my

research also asks: how do representations of Islam and Muslims through discourses of terrorism work to reduce an extremely diverse category of people to the stereotypes of the 'violent Muslim man' and 'passive, oppressed Muslim woman'? Do these representations fuel racist assumptions that Muslim men are especially prone to violence, including against their own wives? We can see that the effects of this discursive move are not only affective — for example, heightened fear among Muslims living in predominantly non-Muslim countries (Sthanki, 2007). Such representations also fuel regressive legislation that targets Muslims and significantly reduces their rights bearing capacity (Razack, 2008). They also contribute to a constellation of factors limiting abuse survivors' access to legal and formal support services (Sthanki, 2007). In this sense, the normalization of violence *against* Muslim people is accomplished through the discursive construction of Islam and Muslims as *prone to* violence. This again connects to Sarah's investigations into how violence against Indigenous people is normalized through gendered and racialized colonial representations.

In this work, my own positionality is always in question. In my intertwined activist and academic engagements, I strive to enact a collaborative feminist praxis that forefronts accountability, reciprocity, and transparency (Pulido, 2008; Swarr and Nagar, 2010). Yet by its nature, this is always a dynamic process — accountability, reciprocity, and transparency are not static states, but rather are continually constituted through one's attention to and participation in them. As both Sarah's and Cindy's work demonstrate, the history and present of white settler colonialism shape not only the conditions within which vulnerability to domestic violence takes shape and is negotiated, but also the conditions for collaborative activist and intellectual work across boundaries of power and difference. In particular, the operation of Orientalism through white settler colonialism serves as a 'third pillar of white supremacy,' as Andrea Smith asserts (2006), and perpetuates the logic that racialized immigrant groups represent timeless, exotic and inferior 'civilizations' that pose a continual threat to the sovereignty and power of Western nations. This means that members of such racialized immigrant groups in the U.S. – both those who are Muslim and those who are perceived to be – might sometimes occupy positions of privilege (due to lighter skin color or higher class status), but nonetheless signify a perpetual foreign threat to the U.S. and its 'war on terror' (the same threat which justifies this unending war) (Smith, 2006).

Question 2: Speaking broadly about material and ideological aspects of settler colonialism, how does your work illuminate how the nation is understood or constructed across various sites or discourses? How are certain types of violence made invisible or beyond what becomes named as 'violence'?

Sarah: Indigenous peoples' bodies have become sites of naturalized violence, and are marked by this violence while the perpetrators are not marked in the same way. For example, this can be seen in representations of missing and

murdered Indigenous women, as the photographs of missing women serve to maintain their racialized, marginal status while images of mass murderer William Pickton do not mark white men as violent. It has been argued that sexual violence is a central tool of colonialism, enacting and reinforcing Indigenous peoples' dehumanized status. Andrea Smith (2005) writes, "the extent to which Native peoples are not seen as 'real' people in the larger colonial discourse indicates the success of sexual violence, among other racist and colonialist forces, in destroying the perceived humanity of Native peoples" (12). Indigenous people are marked by this relationship to violence as they move across rural, urban, reserve and non-reserve spaces, as they remain subjects of spaces of expected and accepted violence (Hunt, 2012). I understand this association with violence as rooted in categories of 'Indians' and 'Indian space' or 'Indian reserves', which have become naturalized in Canadian society and in much scholarship on Indigenous-government relations. Colonial ideas about the degeneracy of 'Indian reserves' and 'Indians' serve to legitimize state intervention into these spaces throughout all of Canada, both on and off reserve, as Indigenous people are seen as unable to govern themselves and to care for their families and communities. This framing helps to reinforce the claim of the Canadian state over all of Canada, where any 'Indian spaces' (i.e. reserves, households, impoverished urban neighbourhoods) are under federal jurisdiction, as 'Indians' and their spaces are in the 'care' of the government as framed in the foundational *Indian Act*. Structural violence is concealed through the naturalization of these spaces as degenerate, such that the places of 'Indians' can only be visible as spaces of expected violence. The spatio-legal production of states of exception disguise violence with rationality and render it legitimate (Pratt, 2005; Razack, 2002). This rationality can be seen at work in other sites of naturalized racial erasure, such as in Nelson's (2008) examination of Africville, Nova Scotia. Here, Nelson examines how racism disguises itself in everyday, normative logics of progress, citizenship and family to justify spatialized practices of containment, surveillance, control and erasure, which also connects with Amy's work on the normalization of violence against Muslim people. Nelson (2008) writes, "racialized groups are seen not only to live within defiled spaces, but to embody those spaces" (33). Thus, in colonial Canada, Indigenous people might be understood as embodying reserves, as spaces of expected violence, thus making it impossible for violence against Indigenous bodies to be acknowledged as such within colonial socio-legal discourse.

Underlying these naturalized geographies of violence, Indigenous socio-legal relations remain active and vital sites of identity formation for many Indigenous people. But these relations are lived in tension with colonial geographies, which are enforced through Canadian socio-legal norms. For example, when we talk about Indigenous people migrating to cities from reserves, reserves are naturalized as 'Indian space' while cities are naturalized as 'white space'. In this rendering, we forget that before there were cities, Indigenous people were active across these lands and Indigenous land title continues to be unceded in most of BC's cities. We easily forget the city as a site of dispossession. Across these naturalized colonial

geographies in which Indigenous people become 'Indians' (subjects of 'Indian space', or of the reserve), there are no spaces where violence against Indigenous people is seen as problematic. Everywhere, violence against us is normalized, embedded in the social fabric of colonial relations.

Bringing violence against Indigenous women to light in both urban and rural spaces has included trying to manipulate existing legitimate categories so as to include native women as valid subjects — as mothers, sisters, and aunties, family members worthy of mourning and searching for. It has included a kind of category jumping, trying to fit our loved ones within those groups that matter. This leaves the most highly stigmatized categories, such as sex worker (or more popularly in colonial discourse, prostitute or whore) as ones of naturalized violence. It does nothing to humanize and validate sex workers. Indeed, many arguments in favour of further criminalizing and abolishing sex work rely on the categorization of sex workers as pure victims. This categorization denies sex workers and other 'pure victims' any access to agency or choice, instead positioning 'us' (as valid native women who are mothers/sisters/daughters) in a position of knowing better. Rather than focusing on the needs, experiences and voices of sex workers themselves, we instead hear from those who want to save them. To me, this sounds a lot like the hegemonic discourse that facilitated and justified colonialism in the first place — saving the 'Indians' from themselves, by materializing this thinking in legal force, Indian residential schools, and reserves (Hunt, 2013).

Community groups worked for many years to fight for acknowledgement of violence against sex workers, drug users, and impoverished women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, and they continue to do so in the face of ongoing violence, poverty and marginalization. In these struggles for visibility, it is assumed that more legal and government intervention is the way to achieve justice. Now I'm not necessarily disagreeing with this — law is a very powerful site of resistance, because it is a means through which dominant power relations become legitimized and materialized. But only seeking visibility in law, and seeing legal solutions as the pathway to social change, renders invisible the violence of law itself, in its many forms. As Mohawk legal scholar Patricia Monture-Angus (1999) observed, "the problem with creating revolution through judicial activity is the fact that the judiciary is intended to be a stabilizing force, not a revolutionary one" (48). This stabilizing force includes the ways that categorizations of 'Indians' have been imposed by the federal government, determining our rights and ignoring Indigenous ways of identifying ourselves (which gets at the heart of self-determination). So ultimately I think we need to consider the interrelated nature of violence against native women and the violence of law, in upholding inherently gendered and racialized Indigenous-state relations.

Amy: My research is also concerned with state violence and the violence of the law in relation to violence against women, particularly for communities marginalized and oppressed through racialized and colonial logics of exclusion. Over the past thirty years, feminist activists and scholars have documented and

contested the interrelationships between the systematic oppression of particular communities and the challenges those same communities face in responding to domestic violence. This work has also highlighted creative strategies of resistance, through which marginalized communities find means to resist *both* domestic violence and oppression/violence faced by women and men in targeted communities. This is true at both sites of my research — in the U.S. (Crenshaw, 1991; Incite!, 2006) and in India (Gangoli, 2007; Kumar, 1993). Much of this discussion in the U.S. emerged and continues to push forward through the work of women of color, Indigenous women and immigrant women who insist upon the interconnections between violences experienced by racialized and immigrant women and the structural, state and symbolic violences continually targeted at people of all genders in these same communities. Indigenous women in the U.S., like the communities Sarah works with in Canada, have worked to make visible the relationship between dehumanizing constructions of Indigenous people and normalized sexual violence faced by Indigenous women (Smith, 2005). At the front lines of advocacy and community organizing in response to violence against women, for marginalized communities this means a constant negotiation of state and legal structures and resources, including accessing protections for victims *and* advocating for measures to protect victims and their families and communities from state practices and structures. For example, for an immigrant survivor of violence whose legal status in the U.S. is dependent upon that of her abuser, this might mean simultaneously accessing whatever private services are available for her (i.e. housing, food, etc.) while at the same time either seeking legal status for her or helping her to avoid legal structures that could lead to her deportation.

In my dissertation project and current work with API Chaya's Peaceful Families Taskforce, I seek to extend this discussion to Muslim communities in the U.S. I am interested in interrogating state and public discourses of Muslims as racialized immigrant others, particularly in terms of how 'violence' is obscured and highlighted. Even as representations proliferate of Muslims (in the U.S. and globally) as a 'threat' because of 'their violence' (against 'us' and against 'their women'), the violence of the U.S. state is obscured. Such erasure covers the founding of the U.S. state through violence and genocide, and the continued authorization of state and structural violence using temporal and spatial logics of western liberal modernity (i.e. fighting the 'enemies' of 'progress' and 'civilization'). This apparent contradiction reveals the farce of authorizing state violence to 'save' women from interpersonal or 'cultural' violence (Abu Lughod, 2002; Narayan, 1987). Here my work again connects to Sarah's, as Orientalist rationalities parallel those of colonialism in Canada and the U.S., obscuring state violence through narratives that locate and expect violence on the bodies and in spaces of Muslims and Indigenous peoples. By interrogating logics of 'legitimate violence,' we lay bare the kind of work these ideological and material processes of empire do in making certain forms of violence invisible, while pushing other forms of violence to center stage.

Prevailing representations of Muslims as violent and Muslim homes and families as sites of violence serve to elide the role of nationalism and the U.S. state in *producing* these naturalized representations. At the same time, they serve to invisibilize the structural violence done by the U.S. state to Muslims (of varying status) living in the U.S. — through legal exclusions and authorized violations of legal and human rights (Razack, 2008; Sthanki, 2007). So, on the one hand, in the discursive construction of the U.S. nation through its 'war on terror,' the systematic violence of post-9/11 legal structures experienced by Muslims and other immigrants is erased. And on the other, incidents of violence against women receive disproportionate attention, such as in the tropes of a U.S. invasion of Afghanistan 'saving' Afghan women from violence. This Orientalist logic simultaneously produces Muslims living both outside and within the U.S. as 'others' (regardless of their citizenship status), whilst solidifying the purported superiority of U.S. culture and values.

As Sarah and Cindy have discussed in their work in different ways, this ongoing production of the nation is by no means contained within the boundaries of the nation-state. Nor does it proceed only through macro scales of the state or even the extensions of U.S. imperial power. In discourse and in practice, this complex relationship between state (or structural) violence and violence against women criss-crosses these scales and moves between them and the home, the family, the body. In my activist and academic work, I question the extent to which these violent representations of Islam and Muslims, and the material violences they authorize, might impact response to domestic abuse within Muslim communities. For example, this targeting of Muslims and labeling of Muslim men as somehow more violent may in fact serve to invisibilize cases of domestic violence. The climate of fear and discrimination that many Muslim subjects must navigate in the U.S. might feed into hesitancies in reporting or talking about domestic violence — for example because of a validated fear of bringing increased state scrutiny or violence into one's home or upon one's community. As we will discuss in the next question, communities often navigate this with creative strategies that forgo legal or formal anti-violence mechanisms.

Sarah: This question of the violence inherent in nation-building seems central to all of our work, as the communities we work with are imagined as either invisible or outside of the nation, which is then enshrined in legal categories of difference. However, Indigenous people are uniquely situated in relation to nation-building, as the reception of Canadian and U.S. sovereignty are founded upon the erasure of Indigenous self-determination through *terra nullius* and the doctrine of discovery, which categorize Indigenous people as incapable of formulating their own systems of law. For many other groups, including LGBTQ people, as Cindy will discuss, and Muslim people, as Amy has said, exclusion from 'the nation' can be a form of erasure which serves to normalize and perpetuate violence. Yet as Cindy's work explores, efforts to be included in 'the nation' can serve to further invisiblize the violent nature that is inherent to the ongoing work of maintaining

colonial state relations. Within settler nations like Canada and the United States, how can any effort to be recognized by the state avoid perpetuating these dominant paradigms of Indigenous erasure? The daily, material realities of violence are clearly connected to the boundaries around legal recognition of these groups as legitimate subjects within the nation. Yet for Indigenous peoples, the myth of the 'discovery' of Canada upon which the legitimacy of the nation itself depends, serves to continually erode our self-determination and legitimacy as peoples capable of formulating law. Our dehumanization is inherent in how the nation itself comes into being.

Amy: Another example of how the law itself limits the ability to address and recognize violence can be seen in recent U.S. Congressional debates surrounding the renewal of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA). Despite previous bi-partisan support for the law, VAWA was allowed to expire in 2011 and its renewal became a contentious political question. Primarily, the bill was challenged by conservative Republican lawmakers who objected to three aspects — anti-violence programming supporting work in LGBTQ communities, granting a limited number of VISAs to undocumented victims of abuse, and a provision that would make it legal for non-tribal members to be tried in tribal courts for domestic violence charges. Despite decades of activist work demonstrating the necessity of specialized response for marginalized victims of domestic violence, Congress members debated whether or not these provisions were needed to support 'real' victims. While the renewal did eventually pass in 2013, the debate surrounding it demonstrates that for some communities, exclusion from certain notions of citizenship and national belonging constitutes a radically different relationship both to the nation and to state agencies responsible for enforcing anti-domestic violence laws. Access to justice or even to legal recognition is limited for individuals and communities whose subjecthood is imagined as outside of the white settler colonial notion of citizenship.

Cindy: My research highlights examples from my work in queer and feminist anti-violence movements to illustrate how the violent and "living nature of colonialism" (De Leeuw & Hunt, 2012) is continually erased within queer and feminist anti-violence, safety and rights discourses in Canada. The stories we tell about violence in a white settler society are also spatialized stories about who belongs and who doesn't belong in the nation (Morten-Robinson, 2004; Razack, 2002). These stories (and the categories produced through them) rely on one another in complex and hierarchical ways, and they are materialized through racist violent practices.

Similar to Sarah and Amy's analyses, examples from my research highlight the way colonial violence (including state violence) is naturalized and made invisible as something that is *not violence*. This is often accomplished through normalizing rhetorical strategies in queer and feminist anti-violence social movements that naturalize the violence and the spaces within which it occurs (Holmes, 2012). The findings of my research suggest that hegemonic white

feminist and white LGBTQ anti-violence movements are sites where colonial violence is obscured or erased. By constructing the violence on Indigenous women's bodies as "outside the frame of reference" within an anti-hate crimes organizing committee or "not belonging" at a lesbian domestic violence workshop, or describing racist and colonial violence as "off topic" in an LGBTQ anti-violence roundtable forum, white anti-violence activists, queers, feminists and policy-makers are complicit in the colonial violence of expulsion that functions to assert their/our rightful place as owners of the land. Positioning colonial violence as outside these categories and spaces produces a regime of truth that is a discursive, material and spatial tactic of white supremacy. As numerous scholars and activists have shown (including Sarah and Amy in their work discussed here), this form of expulsion from ideological, material and geographic space is a racialized and colonial act of violence (Jiwani, 2006; Monture-Angus, 1995; Razack, 2002; Thobani, 2007). In the case of hegemonic feminist and queer anti-violence discourses, this move renders the violence against, and the bodies of, queer and trans people of color and Indigenous and Two-Spirit people, an impossibility within the dominant imaginary.

As Sarah discussed earlier in reference to Jennifer Nelson's (2008) work on Africville, spatial boundaries are mobilized and enforced through discourses to manage and regulate populations, and to separate and differentiate between respectable and degenerate subjects. Through these socio-spatial processes certain bodies are seen to belong in some spaces and not others (Nelson, 2008; Razack, 2002). To understand how these meanings come to be, we must deconstruct and problematize the taken-for-granted meanings attached to categories of violence and to spaces coded as public or private, or the space of the home, the city, the reserve and the nation, for example.

While working for a province-wide feminist anti-violence organization, I co-coordinated a series of roundtables and training workshops in 2004-2005, about violence in the lives of LGBTQ people in smaller urban centers in British Columbia, including Kelowna on the unceded traditional territories of the Syilx peoples. The stories we heard from LGBTQ people in Kelowna indicated that the city did not feel like a safe and welcoming space for non-heterosexual and gender nonconforming people and their children. Many said they felt that the mayor's refusal to include the word 'pride' in a city proclamation for Lesbian and Gay Pride Day nearly a decade earlier, had contributed to increased homophobia, transphobia and anti-LGBTQ violence in Kelowna and had communicated a message to LGBTQ people that they did not belong in the city. At the same time though, significantly, some participants told us that the racist violence in the city towards Indigenous people and people of color, was as bad or worse than the anti-LGBTQ violence and that the denial of racism within queer communities was a serious problem to be addressed. Tensions surfaced over how to address racist violence within the project. While no-one actually said 'racism is not a gay issue,' some white gays and lesbians implied this by asserting that racist violence was 'off topic'

and would take time and energy away from addressing what was defined as the *real* issue at hand — homo/transphobic violence. The normative categories and frameworks for LGBTQ (and feminist) anti-violence organizing in Canada positioned the problem of racist violence as outside of the mandate of the work in LGBTQ communities.

Through this, I became interested in how the city of Kelowna is imagined as a certain kind of place for a certain kind of citizen. My interest in these issues intensified upon moving to Kelowna in 2005, just before starting my doctorate. In one of my case studies, I looked at Kelowna as a site, in the historical and socio-spatial production of the city, in stories of homophobia, transphobia and racism and anti-LGBTQ violence in the city, in the mayor's refusal to proclaim Lesbian and Gay Pride Day in 1997, and in the subsequent BC Human Rights Tribunal in 2000. I wanted to understand how the Pride Day controversy and subsequent human rights case set the stage for a specific conceptualization of LGBTQ safety, belonging, and rights in the city in the years that followed. I examined how discourses about Lesbian and Gay Pride Day and violence against gays and lesbians in the city, became spatialized and racialized narratives about rights and belonging in the city and the nation.

Much of the academic literature on gay and lesbian belonging does not examine how geographies of belonging are related hierarchically within and across local and national scales and how the spatial politics of belonging are never outside of race. I have been interested in the complex and interlocking nature of white gay and lesbian belonging in the city of Kelowna and how it is intimately related to belonging to the Euro-Canadian colonial nation and the subsequent violence of nation-building.

Although queer bodies continue to be constructed as a threat in the public sphere (where the ideal and dominant public citizen is constructed as white, bourgeois, heterosexual and male), certain queer bodies are positioned as less threatening to the nation than others (Puar, 2006). Certain normative, privileged, responsibilized, domesticated queer bodies reinforce and legitimate, rather than destabilize, nationalist and colonialist projects. Tolerance of certain queer bodies then, can be part of a liberal white settler homonationalist project (Morgensen, 2010). In my examination of the 1996/97 Pride Day in Kelowna, I found that a discourse of tolerance of gays and lesbians was mobilized by the local media and some heterosexuals in the city, to bolster Kelowna's identity as a civilized and modern place of progress. In doing so, liberal gay rights rhetoric and discourses of normalcy, respectability and tolerance were used as *civilizing* discourses to whiten the city. Gays and lesbians relied on racialized discourses of respectability and civility to show that they were not degenerate Others and to secure a place in the city and the nation.

As we've been discussing, discourses of rights, citizenship and belonging, including queer discourses, are frequently constructed in colonial nations upon the

disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty and the construction of immigrants of color as enemies of the nation. Damien Riggs (2006) notes that while the desire for acceptance and belonging by white gays and lesbians "represents a desire to live a life free of anti-queer violence, it also signifies a desire for acknowledgement within the [white] national imaginary" (80). The cost of this, Riggs argues, is an investment in the terms for belonging as set by the nation, terms that are linked to various practices of empire, including the disavowal of colonial violence and denial of Indigenous sovereignty.

In white settler societies, it is important for non-Indigenous queers to continually ask: how can we make links between the local and the national, the colonial history and colonial present, and interrogate the interlocking politics and geographies of belonging and rights from our multiple positions of privilege and marginality? When white queers speak of our right to place, our right to belong, our right to feel welcome, our right to walk down the street free from violence, we must integrate an interlocking and anti-colonial analysis so that we do not frame claims for sexual justice and belonging in ways that (re)produce racial and class hierarchies and perpetuate colonial violence.

Question 3: How do we see individuals challenging the complicity of white settler colonialism within social movements, the academy or activist circles? How can resistance and agency be made central in our analysis of violence in the context of settler colonialism? What role do we have as critical geographers to imagine 'other worlds'?

Sarah: As stated in the introduction, I am inspired by JK Gibson-Graham's (2008) call for those of us working within the academy to imagine 'other worlds,' uncovering nonhegemonic ways of thinking (in their case, noncapitalist economic relations; in my case decolonial legal geographies) in order to make them more real, more viable in the world. For Indigenous people, this 'uncovering' is very literally the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges which have been legislatively disrupted (and in some cases criminalized) by generations of colonial government policies which sought to get rid of Indigenous languages, cultural practices and worldviews. Yet many other people and communities also live beyond the limitations of the English language, expressing gendered, racialized and other ways of being which are not reflected in dominant socio-legal discourse or are, indeed, violently erased by them. Thus, responding to Gibson-Graham's call to imagine or uncover 'other worlds' entails not only examining dominant paradigms of knowledge, but also being attuned to those ways of being which are situated beyond the boundaries of dominant discourse, through interventions at the level of ontology, as we work to understand the world well beyond geographic disciplinary norms. However, in addition to the creation of new kinds of geographic knowledge, this work requires grounding our analysis in the material realities of the communities where we live and work.

As an Indigenous woman who has been working on violence since I was a teen, my understanding of violence is foundationally rooted in everyday acts of resistance. While a discourse of violence has been created to draw attention to the prevalence of missing and murdered Indigenous women across Canada, it is my view that this discourse fails to represent the resilience, agency and power of Indigenous girls and women. Instead, it often reproduces damage-centered research, which frames our communities as "spaces saturated in the fantasies of outsiders" (Tuck, 2009, 412). Over the years of working on violence, I began to feel frustrated as I saw that in trying to draw attention to the extreme levels of violence in our communities, I was at risk of reproducing the tropes that helped to justify colonialism in the first place. Representing Indigenous girls and women purely as victims in need of government or legal help in order to 'save' or 'protect' us does nothing to dislodge the colonial relations in which our victimization has become normalized. Looking beyond this discourse, I have seen a multitude of ways that individuals and communities are working to challenge norms around violence and inspire different ways of relating.

As we can see from the activism of women in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, as well as daily acts of rebellion and advocacy in rural communities, our homes and streets, Indigenous women and girls are standing up and speaking out in the face of normalized violence. We are cultural knowledge keepers, dancers and singers, students, and in many other ways, vital members of our communities. As a community-based educator and former front-line worker, I have seen the incredible ways that Indigenous girls are thriving in the face of colonial violence and am inspired by the work of young women and Two-Spirit people like Jessica Danforth (Native Youth Sexual Health Network, 2013) who founded the Native Youth Sexual Health Network as a teenager labeled 'at risk' by the government. How can this strength be made visible alongside the violence that continues to be perpetrated against Indigenous girls and women?

Importantly, for Indigenous people, imagining 'other worlds' is not just about creating new knowledge, but is about empowering very ancient and dynamic systems of thought, which have been suppressed through the violence of colonial relations. Principles of Indigenous self-determination might be a starting point for sorting out this mess of colonial violence in the lives of Indigenous Two-Spirit people, , girls and women, as well as our families and communities more broadly (Hunt, 2013). Denaturalizing colonial spatial arrangements is key.

The kinds of subjects created through federal *Indian Act* relations continue to be manifested in the governance of reserves and the naturalization of reserves as 'Indian space'. Turning away from these logics and understanding Indigenous geographies as being already always alive, relational and active in these lands helps to acknowledge Indigenous subjects as existing alongside the colonially constructed 'Indian'. This requires that Indigenous communities shed their subjectivity as only federal subjects requiring the 'care' of the government and Canadian law, and center instead the never surrendered territorial relations alive

upon this land. I see the activation of Indigenous peoples' agency as a critical starting place, as we shift away from colonial categorizations toward those of Indigenous socio-legal relations in which we are active participants in struggles of collective self-determination. Yet we must be careful to ensure this activation of agency extends to all our relations, and that internalized colonial categories are challenged.

For example, the discourse around missing and murdered women often perpetuates tropes around sex work which serve to deny people who trade or sell sex their agency. Thus, sex workers themselves are rarely heard in national or community-level dialogue on violence, and instead more 'legitimate' Indigenous women are invited to speak on their behalf (myself included). As academics, we must be wary of the silence and erasure that is so seamlessly accomplished as we position ourselves as experts, particularly if we seek to represent marginalized members of our communities. One strategy I try to employ is to continually name this erasure and to call for the inclusion of the voices of sex workers themselves in any discussions about missing and murdered women. Given that they continue to be targeted for violence, how do we develop a forward-thinking analysis in which the voices of sex workers are central? Memorializing missing women is crucial to restoring their humanity, but if Indigenous people only begin to count once we're gone, we have failed to truly shift our dehumanization.

Additionally, I am aware of the erasure of trans and Two-Spirit people within much feminist discourse and work on gender violence, and see the resurgence of Indigenous systems of gender as integral to decolonizing these approaches. I recently realized that one of the women who was murdered by serial killer Robert Pickton was a trans woman, and was troubled that I hadn't known this sooner. The violence of her death is exacerbated by the lack of representation of trans women in national and local discourses of missing and murdered women. How many other Indigenous trans and Two-Spirit people have been murdered or gone missing? Are they included in the national government-funded research on missing and murdered women? An analysis of gendered violence that perpetuates the gender binary necessarily works to erase trans and Two-Spirit people from our communities, a continuation of the violence of colonial categories.

At a material level, individuals continue to work to change the conditions in which violence occurs in the lives of Indigenous people in urban, rural, reserve and non-reserve communities. Even though violence against Indigenous girls and women has gained national and international recognition, daily realities of violence continue. This is because of a disconnect between the federal concerns over policy changes, research reports, and news briefings, and the everyday realities of inequity which shape colonial geographies. In northern BC, billboards have been erected instructing girls not to let their friends hitchhike (paid for by the provincial government), yet no transportation system has been put in place to provide residents with an alternative to hitchhiking, despite the obvious link between transportation and violence in this area. Looking beyond discourses of violence, we

must keep our analysis grounded in the daily, lived realities of those most frequently positioned out of view. This, I think, is a vital part of ensuring my work contributes to 'imagining other worlds' rather than perpetuating the relations of colonial violence in which we currently live.

Amy: The theoretical interventions and movement-based work of feminist and critical race scholar-activists continue to enrich our collective understanding of violence in the context of white settler colonialism. In this work, resistance and agency take center stage, not merely as theoretical concepts or as slogans, but rather as complex formations of collective action and contested negotiations of structures of white, colonial power. In advocating for and working with racialized survivors of domestic violence, women of color activists have significantly advanced, and in places radicalized, the anti-violence movement in the U.S. They have done so through their insistence not only on recognizing the agency of 'victims', but also on recognizing that resisting domestic violence necessitates resistance to complex forms of oppression and violence experienced by racialized and immigrant communities.

My own engagements — as a critical, feminist geographer interested in imagining 'other worlds' — have proven to me that while there is never a clear line between dominance and resistance, understanding how violence operates requires critical learning from, and at sites of, resistance. In community mobilizing and movements against domestic violence, I think some of the most compelling (and complicated) forms of resistance are those that centralize prevention and long-term, community-based response. In the U.S., one example of this is the work of the national Peaceful Families Project and the Seattle-area Peaceful Families Taskforce. This work acknowledges and draws on Qur'anic models of peace and actively engages in dialogue and community-based interventions within diverse Muslim communities to envision and enact peace within relationships, families and communities. This includes active discussion around gender, marriage and family relationships.

The work of the PFT and of API Chaya more broadly also demonstrate the constant negotiation of the 'messy middle grounds' of dominance and resistance (Sparke, 2008) in supporting the needs of survivors. Even as these organizations and movements actively question and challenge the role of state violence (through police actions, biased judicial processes, etc.) and structural inequalities (based on gender, race, sexuality, and other exclusionary markers of difference) — even as they strategize and enact resistance to these structures, they must also at times engage them. Such engagements include, for example, when a survivor of violence chooses to leave an abusive partner and seeks a protection order, or when an immigrant survivor wishes to seek their own, separate legal status as a resident of the U.S. A host of other more mundane examples also proliferate —as agencies supporting survivors of domestic violence may need to seek housing support, food stamps, job training assistance, or a host of other public services for the women and families they support. And yet, even as organizations like API Chaya might seek

cooperation and forms of partnership with the prosecutor's office or county sheriff, they are also aware that legal and state structures are in many cases oppressive or violent for the communities they serve. And so through other organizing, educational outreach in those same structures, and coalition work, they seek to hold state actors accountable and to confront systems of oppression and violence that underlie and exacerbate women's vulnerability to and experiences of domestic violence.

As a critical geographer, my relationship to this work is both complicated and quite simple. On the simple side of things, I have committed myself intellectually, emotionally and politically to the work of anti-oppression and anti-violence. For me, this means a dynamic and always processual enactment of a critical feminist praxis (Swarr and Nagar, 2010). It means that in my collaborative work with API Chaya and the PFT, I seek to enact *accountability*, to take seriously *reciprocity* as mutual in its definition and sometimes mundane in its form (Pulido, 2008), to embrace *reflexivity* as an ongoing labor, and perhaps most importantly, to understand and to publically acknowledge that much of the knowledge produced through our encounters is "communally wrought" (Mohanty, 2003). This may sound like a romantic vision of scholar-activism. And indeed, the relationships I have formed with collaborators, now friends, at API Chaya are for the most part accountable and reciprocal, and are always rich sites for the formation of collective understandings and collaborative knowledge production. Yet I do not mean to suggest that my role in this work is not complicated or problematic. In her opening remarks at the *Decolonizing Cascadias?: 2013 Critical Geographies Mini Conference* where the three of us first discussed these topics, Harsha Walia gave a brilliant account of the difference between 'claiming' and 'striving for' allyship, the former being an enactment of power and the latter being a process and acknowledgement that privilege is not erased simply by our attempts to subvert it through working for social change. I strive for allyship, but I also carry my privileges with me in this work —my university credentials, my white skin, my U.S. citizenship. And as a non-Muslim working on a research project in Muslim communities (with PFT), my role in the project has been questioned by another volunteer on our research team. While other team members who knew and trusted me were not as concerned about my outsider role in this project, we took this concern seriously. We had many discussions in order to clarify all of our roles, to address the person's questions directly, and to validate her asking of those questions in the first place, thereby intentionally leaving the door open for any future issues that team members might want to raise. This did not, of course, erase my privileges as a university-based researcher or my privileged outsider status relative to the Muslim communities at the center of our project. And while my long history of working with particular staff at API Chaya made it possible for me to become a trusted member of the research team, this history or time does not and cannot erase the reality of my privileges and the power dynamics they represent, in particular those signified by my whiteness. In my contributions to API Chaya and PFT's community-based research project, we have also seen the ways in which the

privileges of my being a university-based researcher can be strategically mobilized to support API Chaya's goals and work. For example, we've been able to access a number of free university resources that the organization might otherwise have to pay for (such as student research assistants, meeting space, advice and mentorship from other researchers experienced with community-based work, and human subjects review). As this research project has no allocated funding, and is run primarily by volunteers with limited staff time, accessing these university resources has been a vital support for our work. For me, then, being a 'critical' scholar and an active collaborator in anti-violence movements means balancing visions of new worlds and oppressions undone with everyday practices of resistance and strategic engagement. It also always means continually re-evaluating both.

Cindy: In my research, I found that normative discourses are simultaneously reproduced and resisted. The evidence of resistance and contradiction suggests that many white and middle-class queer anti-violence organizers possess an intellectual understanding of some of the problems with normative, de-raced and de-classed frameworks and attempt to shift them, albeit to varying degrees and with contradictory effects. Despite the challenges to normative framings, many of the dominant discourses simultaneously rely on and reproduce white settler homonormativity.

As a white queer woman involved in various social movements as well as my work as a critical geographer, I am interested in the complex effects of resistance as well as the way resistance is itself erased or made visible. There have always been everyday acts of resistance by Indigenous people and people of color but they are often minimized or erased by dominant media discourses and within white-dominated activist spaces as well. Or their acts of resistance are used to represent them as violent 'troublemakers' (for example in dominant media representations of Indigenous people in Canada, Maslin, 2002) or 'terrorists' (for example, in constructions of immigrants of colour in Canada and especially Arab and Muslim Canadians, Jiwani, 2006). Another strategy that functions to erase resistance efforts is to describe it as *new*. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Simpson (2013) recently discussed this regarding the mainstream media representation of the Idle No More movement: "Idle No More has consistently rejected the framing of protestors as fed up and angry, or of the mobilization as 'new'. The movement is in fact a continuation of 400 years of resistance".

Looking at resistance efforts of white people within feminist and queer anti-violence movements necessarily involves critical reflexivity and analysis about some of the problematic effects of discourses and efforts described as 'resistant' or 'emancipatory', regardless of how well-intentioned they are. My research highlights some of the contradictory effects of resistance efforts and the way whiteness is reproduced within feminist and queer anti-violence movements. For example, in a lesbian domestic violence prevention curriculum, I found that discourses of 'diversity' and 'intersectionality' effectively complicate generic and universal de-raced and de-classed constructions of identity, but they also reproduce

whiteness through narratives of benevolence and racial innocence by white queer women (e.g. 'we're good non-racist feminists' and 'benevolent helpers to women of color and Aboriginal women') (Holmes, 2011).

This is not to say that I deny or devalue the work of white settler allies in the ongoing process of decolonization. For example, there are white settler allies working towards decolonization across different scales and relationships — coalition building, grassroots activism and solidarity work with Indigenous communities, challenging racism and colonialism within families, schools, workplaces and social movements, writing and teaching (Hunt & Holmes, Forthcoming; Morgenson, 2010; Regan, 2010; Riggs, 2006). But I remain cautious and critical of celebratory narratives of white resistance, while still honoring the ways white people can and do build alliances, strengthen coalitions, and practice accountability. As a white settler ally, imagining 'other worlds' means embracing what Vanessa Andreotti (2012) calls "an attitude of *sceptical optimism* or *hopeful scepticism* (as opposed to *naïve hope* or *dismissive scepticism*) in order to stretch the legacy of frameworks we have inherited" (25). Imagining other worlds involves a process that combines critical reflexivity, white settler accountability, social action and sceptical optimism. It also involves unsettling or what I also think of as 'queering' normative understandings of violence, race, space, place, safety and belonging (Bell and Valentine, 1995; Riggs, 2010). I situate my work alongside other scholars who view a queer approach as one that is not only anti-normative, but that also goes beyond a sexual politics of recognition to engage deeply with interlocking/intersectional and anti-colonial/critical race theories and geopolitical issues such as imperialism, colonialism, globalization, migration, neoliberalism and nationalism (Oswin, 2008; Smith, 2010).

White settler allies have to be willing to continually ask if our resistance efforts, violence prevention/intervention, health promotion, and safety initiatives entrench or disrupt white settler, bourgeois and hetero/homonationalist agendas (regardless of how well-intentioned they may be). This approach demands an explicit commitment by white settlers and non-Indigenous people of colour, to a process of decolonization and accountability to Indigenous people struggling against a white settler nation-state. It requires that non-Indigenous people examine what it means to occupy Indigenous land and to examine our complicities and responsibilities. This means keeping an eye on the past and present violence of colonialism, as Sarah discussed, and challenging the idea that colonialism is an event of the past and a problem that is relevant only to Indigenous people.

We must continue to ask how feminist and LGBTQ anti-violence initiatives and agencies can expand their definitions of safety and violence and create strategies that reflect these expanded and more complex understandings of violence, and that address state and interpersonal violence simultaneously (Smith, 2005). This means working on grassroots political issues that are not typically defined by white and middle-class queers as 'queer anti-violence issues'. A recent case in point was the protest in 2012 to stop a 5-story condominium at the

ċəsnaʔəm site in Musqueam traditional and unceded territory in the city of Vancouver British Columbia — ċəsnaʔəm is an ancient village and burial site of the Musqueam people, dating back at least 4,000 years (Musqueam, 2013). As I participated in and followed the protests, I became aware that most feminist and queer anti-violence activists did not see this issue as 'belonging' within the relied upon anti-violence categories or social movements. Positioning the ongoing settler colonial violence of land theft and dispossession of Indigenous people in Canada as outside of the category of 'violence against women' or 'violence in the lives of LGBTQ people' not only illustrates how whiteness continues to shape both feminist and LGBTQ activist and policy discourses on violence but it also produces and maintains the hegemony of white spaces within feminist and LGBTQ social movements. And as Sarah discussed, the space of the city is often forgotten as a site of colonial dispossession.

Lessons from Our Work: Toward a Critical Decolonizing Geography of Violence

In this roundtable dialogue, we have worked to highlight common threads across our diverse research sites in order to bring a critical lens to normative geographies of violence. In doing so, we have drawn both on our activist and community-based work as well as our academic research in order to illuminate several key elements of a critical decolonizing geography of violence. These included: i) spatial processes through which certain forms of colonial violence become normalized or naturalized; ii) the relationality of material and ideological processes through which different forms of violence are rendered visible or invisible, and the spaces and the bodies through which this erasure is enacted; iii) developing interlocking or intersectional analyses of power which are rooted in a decolonizing framework in order to understanding spatial processes of colonialism; iv) disrupting white supremacist thought and practice (hooks, 2003) in the politics of geographic knowledge production in order to address settler colonial accountability; v) theorizing our relationship to the land in anti-violence organizing; vi) moving away from anti-violence strategies and frameworks that reproduce white supremacist and colonialist narratives of 'justice', 'equality', 'diversity'; and vii) acknowledging the limitations of legal structures and responses to address violence, given the violence they enact in the communities where our various work is based, including the central role of law in colonialism.

Our conversation highlighted the importance of looking at how different forms of violence are not only connected but are produced in and through space. We have tried to demonstrate how a spatial analysis might contribute to efforts to end violence by exploring how the production of space across various scales such as the nation, the home, and the reserve are connected to the naturalization of certain types of violence. As we engaged with these themes, the collaborative process of writing this article highlighted the importance of thinking about what norms and categories are produced through language, and thus how disciplinary

norms can be challenged, by questioning normative framings of violence and space.

Additionally, as activist scholars, we explored how we can use our own writing to resist processes through which Indigenous knowledge becomes delegitimized or rendered peripheral to ontological framings of what is considered geographic knowledge. Rather than grounding our analysis solely in the work of acclaimed postcolonial scholars, where possible we chose instead to engage a politic of decolonization by centering the lived realities of Indigenous people and people of color in the communities in which we live and work. For each of us, literally making space within this article, as well as the many conversations that were involved in collaboratively writing this article, for Indigenous knowledge and experiential perspectives from the communities with whom we work was an important practice in accountability. In so doing, we find it useful to consider Okanagan scholar Jeanette Armstrong's (1995) call to deconstruct the myths of a colonizing society in order to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs about power and violence, thereby engaging in processes of decolonization. Armstrong (2005) encourages a reorientation away from Western concepts of power and toward Indigenous epistemologies and methodologies which require shifting from focusing on isolated, individual parts of a system, to a realization that we can only understand those parts relationally within the context of the larger whole. As white allies, Cindy and Amy's recognition of the influences of Indigenous scholars and feminists of color on their theorizing and practice was a critical aspect of interrogating whose knowledge is validated in academic knowledge production. These conversations about the politics and limitations of language, voice and expertise entail interventions at the level of ontology, and we thus encourage critical geographers to engage in dialogue at this interpersonal level in order to deepen decolonizing practices within the discipline.

Through this collaboration, we have learned that creating a critical decolonizing geography of violence requires actively undoing what we have come to take for granted as 'violence' and 'space', engaging with the lived realities and distinct forms of knowledge offered by Indigenous peoples and racialized communities. In so doing, Indigenous and non-Indigenous geographers alike must consider the complexities of centering this knowledge while not appropriating it, nor enfolding it within pre-existing Western geographic ontologies. Collaborative conversations and writing across geographies of colonial violence shift us all out of our place as 'experts', as we instead write ourselves into a community of diversely located scholar-activists engaged in broader decolonizing projects. We hope that this conversation provides a glimpse into the disciplinary processes through which a critical decolonizing geography of violence may begin to take shape, rooted strongly in the material realities of colonial violence on the lands upon which we all live and work.

Acknowledgements

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