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CONFRONTING THE RACIAL-COLONIAL FOUNDATIONS OF US HIGHER EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

Aim/Purpose	This paper invites readers to engage with analyses that diagnose the racial-colonial foundations of US universities as the root cause of many contemporary higher education challenges. To do so, it traces the “underside” of violence that subsidized three moments in US higher education history: the colonial era; land-grant legislation; and the post-War “golden age.” I argue that confronting these foundational violences, and our complicity in them, is a necessary part of any effort to unravel the harmful inherited patterns of representation, relationship, and resource distribution that continue to shape the present.
Methodology	This conceptual article reads mainstream histories of US higher education against the grain, and in conversation with critiques offered by decolonial and critical ethnic studies, in an effort to address the historical and ongoing racial-colonial conditions of possibility for our institutions.
Contribution	This paper contributes to scholarship on the foundations of higher education by inviting engagements with often-disavowed dimensions of those foundations.
Findings	Many of US higher education’s greatest achievements have not merely happened alongside, but have also been subsidized by racial-colonial dispossession. The fact that the higher education field rarely addresses these entangled histories may not be primarily due to a lack of information, but rather due to strong affective, material, and intellectual investments in the continuation of existing systems.
Recommendations for Researchers and Practitioners	In addition to pluralizing our analyses of higher education’s foundations, scholars and practitioners will need to grapple with the difficulties and discomforts of facing up to the contemporary implications of those foundations.
Future Research	With regard to both the ethical imperatives and political efficacy of responding to contemporary challenges, further research is needed that traces both the continuities and disjunctures between the past and the present of higher education.
Keywords	higher education, history, foundations, capitalism, colonialism, racism

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INTRODUCTION

Given the many political and economic challenges facing US higher education today, it is a common rhetorical strategy to compare the dismal present to an idealized past. However, others have used this precarious moment as an opportunity to open up conversations about disavowed histories of violence in higher education (e.g. Chatterjee & Maira, 2014; Grosfoguel, 2013; Mustaffa, 2017; Patton, 2016; Poon, 2018; Rodriguez, 2012; Stein 2016, 2017, forthcoming; Wilder, 2013). This latter set of accounts suggests that the inequities and injustices of the present are not entirely novel, but rather are the legacy and continuation of a higher education system whose foundations have been deeply entangled with the logics, relations, and infrastructures of racial-colonial capitalism since its beginnings. These accounts suggest that not only does idealizing our foundations foreclose on the possibility that these patterns of violence will be interrupted, but also that romanticized narratives of the past offer little strategic purchase in efforts to grapple with the challenges of the present. In an effort to support conversations within the field of higher education that might enable us to move somewhere different, without defining in advance where we might arrive, in this article I invite readers to engage with diagnoses of the present that frame the racial-colonial foundations of US universities as the root cause of contemporary higher education challenges. As Patton (2016) argues, “Capturing the present context of racism/White supremacy in higher education requires acknowledging its violent, imperialistic, and oppressive past” (p. 317). Following Patton, I suggest that in order to address present challenges, we will need to think differently about the past and consider the possibility of futures that do not presume the continuation of racial-colonial capitalism and the harms that it produces.

Much scholarship already cracks the false guise of a “happy” history of US higher education, including historical accounts that document marginalized populations’ exclusion from, subjugation within, and transformation of, mainstream colleges and universities. These histories of marginalization and resistance are also marginalized and resisted histories, in that they are rarely understood as formative or definitive of US higher education as a whole (Chambers & Freeman, 2017; Patton, 2016). Harms done by higher education also exceed immediate institutional contexts, given that many of the greatest accomplishments in higher education history were subsidized by larger political, economic, and epistemic violences. These harms can be understood as the underside of US higher education. Yet even when they are addressed, histories of violence tend to be viewed as separate or distinct from histories of accomplishment. In contrast to the analytical separation of accomplishment and harm, in this article, I engage the insights of decolonial, Black, and Indigenous studies scholars who suggest that racial-colonial violence has always served as a condition of possibility for US higher education. In particular, I consider how universities have been complicit in the racialized exploitation and expropriation of land, labor, and resources, and in the production of socially valued knowledge that sanctions dispossession and seeks to contain or eliminate other ways of knowing and being.

To offer this analysis, I revisit three celebrated eras of US higher education history and examine how the accomplishments of these eras were subsidized by violence. In doing so, I draw on and extend Wilder’s (2013) work on early US colleges’ entanglements with slavery and colonization. Describing the life story of Henry Watson, a white Harvard graduate who learned about scientific racism at his alma mater and eventually became a plantation owner, Wilder says, he “likely never appreciated the intimacy of his connections to Native and African peoples – the ways that their lives unfolded into his hands and his into theirs, but his choices reflect that reality” (p. 8). Arguably, the field of higher education has also failed to realize “the intimacy of our connections” to violent patterns of representation, relationship, and resource distribution, and the implications of those patterns for the present.

I begin the article by arguing that the study of US higher education lacks sustained critical attention to its foundations. Next, I draw on decolonial, Black, and Indigenous critiques in order to outline the primary dimensions of racial-colonial capitalism, and put forth the argument that the “shiny” promises of many US institutions are subsidized by the “shadow” of its constitutive underside. Then, I use this framework to trace the racial-colonial conditions of possibility for three eras of US higher

education history: the colonial, land-grant, and post-War eras. I conclude by gesturing toward some of the challenges and difficulties that are involved in efforts to confront these histories, and by inviting scholars and practitioners to address the fragilities that often surface in response to diagnoses of the present that emphasize historical and ongoing patterns of harm, and our complicity in them.

FOUNDATIONS OF US HIGHER EDUCATION

According to Lather and Clemmons (2008), “foundations of education” is “an ambiguous term” (p. 14), but Tozer (2018) observes that educational foundations scholarship tends to “document that the political-economic hegemony of capitalism, racism, patriarchy, hetero-normativity, and other foundations of inequity will not soon give way to a genuinely democratic society” (p. 90). He further notes, “critical foundations scholarship has taught that higher education in the United States, which employs most foundations scholars, is a significant element of the hegemonic social structure” (p. 90). However, the field of higher education itself lacks a tradition of addressing these foundations in a sustained and cohesive way.

A robust program of inquiry into the foundations of US higher education would potentially have three basic dimensions: one, understanding the role of different social, political, and economic contexts and forces in the development and practice of higher education over time; two, examining how higher education’s material practices and knowledge production reproduce and/or interrupt dominant social, political, and economic forces; and three, asking how higher education might be otherwise than it currently is. Within existing higher education research, most efforts to address foundations are historical; and the historical narratives that dominate in the field and in the required courses of graduate programs are largely “whitestream” histories. According to Grande (2004), to describe something as whitestream is to indicate that it is not only dominated by white people, “but also principally structured on the basis of white, middle-class experience, serving their ethno-political interests and capital investments” (p. 125).

Nidiffer (1999) suggests that histories of marginalized populations in higher education generally fall within one of five categories, or some combination of these: “traditional/omission, increased inclusion, center of analysis, issue specific, and broader social analysis” (p. 323). Most popular historical survey texts have adopted an “increased inclusion” approach. For instance, Thelin’s (2011) *A History of American Higher Education*, Cohen and Kisker’s *The Shaping of American Higher Education*, Lucas’s (1994) *American Higher Education: A History*, and Geiger’s (2014) *The History of American Higher Education* all reference at various points the experiences of racialized and Indigenous people, poor people, and white women, but these tend to be presented as afterthoughts, rather than centered or placed in the context of broader social analyses (Mustaffa, 2017; Nicolazzo & Marine, 2016). As a result, not only are the particular histories of white, male, middle-/upper-class higher education falsely presented as if they were universal “views from nowhere” (Maldonado-Torres, 2011), but the intimate entanglements between those histories and histories of oppression are also obfuscated.

The downstream effects of whitestream history in the field of higher education are considerable. As Poon (2018) argues, “racism, imperialism, and other forms of oppression...remain present and fundamentally entrenched in higher education organizational structures, cultures, and practices” (p. 19), yet these remain largely “invisible in the higher education literature” (Patton, 2016, p. 334). I argue that the field’s lack of engagement with these histories of violence and their enduring impacts can best be understood as a product of disavowal, rather than as the result of a lack of information about these histories. As Bruyneel (2013) notes, “With disavowal, knowledge is present, but acknowledgment is absent” (p. 316). Indeed, many accounts of these violent histories have already been written (both by higher education scholars and others, and in particular those writing in the traditions of decolonial and critical ethnic studies). However, a collective investment in disavowing these histories, and distancing ourselves from complicity in them, helps to enable the seamless reproduction of higher education’s foundational myths and proud organizational sagas (Clark, 1972).

To interrupt these disavowals of US higher education's foundations would require that we not only write and engage with the implications of more counter-histories, but also that we "articulate a method of encountering a past that is not past" (Sharpe, 2016, p. 13). The method that I use in this article is to "unforget" how the reproduction of higher education has been subsidized through harm, by reading whitestream higher education histories against the grain, and putting them into conversation with decolonial narratives and histories. Shotwell (2016) suggests that to "unforget" the past means asking how our present "colonial situation" came to be, how it might be undone, and how we might develop practices of "forward-looking responsibility" (p. 54). To help tell this narrative, I draw on a conceptual framework, outlined below, that attends to how the past produces the present, and how the 'shiny' promises of the US's enduring political, economic, and educational systems are premised on the reproduction and naturalization of racial-colonial capitalist violence.

THE RACIAL-COLONIAL UNDERSIDE

Decolonial, Indigenous, and Black studies scholars trace the intimate connections between the 'shadow' and 'shine' of modern nation-states and capitalist markets (Andreotti, Stein, Ahenakew & Hunt, 2015; Byrd, 2011, 2018; Coulthard, 2014; King, 2016; Mignolo, 2011; Sharpe, 2016; Tuck & Yang, 2012; Walcott, 2014). These scholars contend that colonialism, racism and associated forms of exploitation, dispossession, and environmental destruction are not the result of the *failures or shortcomings* of modern institutions to fulfil their promise of universalism and extend their gifts to all; rather, these violences are understood as the *conditions of possibility* for the (re)production of those infrastructures and related subjectivities. From this perspective, racial-colonial violence is the constitutive underside ('shadow') of the US's 'shiny' achievements (e.g. social mobility, political stability, economic development, legal equality, and public goods). In other words, these achievements have been guaranteed for some only at the expense of others, both "here" and "there" (i.e. domestically and abroad) (Byrd, 2011), who are subject to impoverishment, enslavement, colonial removal and occupation, segregation, incarceration, militarization, environmental pollution, and cognitive imperialism.

Colonial categories divide and order the world into hierarchies of being, which become sedimented into material infrastructures and social relations (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). These categories, structures, and relations were first instituted through conquest and enslavement enacted by European colonial powers starting in the 15th century, and continue to be backed by the force of police and militaries. It was through genocidal violence that colonial powers first made their conception of the world globally hegemonic (Grosfoguel, 2013). Colonial hierarchies, for instance, divide humans from nature, and position "nature" as a set of resources to be exploited by humans, rather than as living entities. However, not all humans are equal within the racial hierarchy of humanity, which is premised on a supposedly universal, linear direction of progress that is headed by white/Euro-descended peoples, while the "others" of Europe lag perpetually behind in their development (Mignolo, 2011; Silva, 2007; Wynter, 2003). For instance, European colonial powers and, later, settler colonies like the US, rationalized the colonization of Indigenous lands using these hierarchies; the land was framed as human property, and because Indigenous peoples were thought to be sub-human, they were deemed unfit 'owners,' thereby justifying colonial settlement. In this way, the epistemological and material dimensions of colonial categories can be understood as mutually reinforcing.

Robinson (2000) argued that capitalism has always been a racialized system, which he described as "racial capitalism." For Robinson and his intellectual successors, racial capitalism is not a particular version of capitalism; rather, "There is no such thing as non-racial capitalism" (Desai & Clarno, 2017, p. 97). As Melamed (2015) notes, capital "require[s] loss, disposability, and the unequal differentiation of human value, and racism enshrines the inequalities that capitalism requires...it does this by displacing the uneven life chances that are inescapably part of capitalist social relations onto fictions of differing human capacities, historically race" (p. 77). Racial capitalism is not only a system of racialized exclusion, but also one of differential (and often compulsory) inclusion into capitalist social relations. In this article, I use "racial-colonial capitalism" to indicate that the origins and ongoing logics,

relations, and infrastructures of capital accumulation are rooted in not only the exploitation of white laborers, but also in the expropriation and dispossession of labor, lands, and lives from Black, Indigenous, and other racialized peoples.

In the US context, in addition to slavery and its anti-Black afterlife (Hartman, 2007; Sharpe, 2016), the ongoing colonization of Indigenous lands (Byrd, 2011; Lipe, 2018), and public policies and programs that disproportionately support white wealth accumulation (e.g. subsidizing home ownership), racial-colonial capitalism has a global imperial dimension. By the mid-19th century, claims about the US's divine "Manifest Destiny" to expand westward had also expanded southward to assert US influence in Latin America through the Monroe Doctrine. Then, by the late 19th/early 20th century, the US had rationalized occupations in Hawai'i, Guam, the Philippines, American Samoa, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Alaska, and North Mariana (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). Since then, the US has enacted numerous other overt and covert interventions around the world in efforts to ensure its political hegemony and economic advantage (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Grossman, n.d.).

Although different segments of white people benefit unequally from racial-colonial capitalism, its overall structure offers white security and prosperity at the expense of Indigenous and racialized peoples. As a result, white people in the US are in positions of structural advantage. For instance, the median net wealth of white families is 10 times that of Black families (Kochhar & Cilluffo, 2017). However, as Du Bois famously noted, even when white individuals are poor, they are advantaged in their relative social and political position, being "compensated in part by a sort of public and psychological wage. They were given public deference and titles of courtesy because they were white. They were admitted freely with all classes of white people to public functions, public parks, and the best schools" (as cited by Nopper, 2011, p. 19). Beyond access to public services and institutions, "wages of whiteness" promise superiority over racialized people in general, and Black people in particular (Nopper, 2011). These "wages" serve as a consolation prize that can foster white people's allegiance to a dominant political and economic order that nonetheless exploits them. Thus, while white supremacy may have emerged as a means to rationalize economic advantage, its dividends exceed direct economic rewards and extend to a sense of entitlement to have one's epistemic certainty confirmed, one's existence valued, and one's moral innocence affirmed. Defensive (and sometimes violent) responses are often triggered when these entitlements are challenged (DiAngelo, 2011).

A racial-colonial capitalist hierarchy continues to govern US social relations in ways that divide humanity into populations of unequal value (Melamed, 2006, 2015). However, the exact formation of this hierarchy has shifted over time, often in response to resistance against it. Rather than being fundamentally transformative, these shifts have largely ensured institutional stability and the maintenance of social order, while serving the function of containing demands for more radical change (Ahmed, 2012; Melamed, 2006). For instance, in the post-World War II, the US shifted from a firm order of white supremacy to a system of conditional racial inclusion. By instituting formal equality through the law, the US state officially dismantled the color line. Yet racial hierarchies did not so much disappear as transmute, not in the least because establishing formal legal equality and conditional inclusion in an existing system does not translate to the structural redistribution of political and economic power; and in general, it forecloses on possibilities for an entirely different political and economic system.

More recently, racial-colonial capitalism has shape-shifted yet again. As global economic growth slows and productivity increases, more people are structurally transformed into surplus laborers. Within the US, this has resulted in underemployment, unemployment, and precarious employment, and in the large-scale warehousing of people through the racialized carceral system (Gilmore, 2007). Meanwhile, outside of the West, many people have been expelled from their traditional lands and had their means of subsistence destroyed, only to find a dearth of steady waged work to support their survival (Davis, 2006). Under modern/colonial hierarchies of unequal human value, racialized and Indigenous populations are already deemed dispensable, but particularly so when their labor is no longer deemed useful for the purposes of capital accumulation (Maldonado-Torres, 2007).

In sum, Walcott (2014) suggests that “proximity to the ‘good life’ in the West still and again largely depends on our historical relationship to the hierarchal practices of colonial ordering and management, and the ongoing purge of the Black from the category of the Human” (p. 96), resulting in “an administrative system of rule” that “frames our social relations, our intimacies, and remains the immediate ground of living life in our present” (p. 96). Yet enjoyment of the shiny promises of US exceptionalism requires disavowing how those promises are enabled by this shadowy underside. This results not only in a willful forgetting of how white institutions and subjectivities are sustained through relations of violence, it also often results in falsely attributing violence to the very people who are subjected to it: racialized and Indigenous people are blamed for the problems that they face as a result of being impoverished, displaced, exploited, or disposed by racial-colonial capitalism’s “administrative system of rule.” As Shotwell (2016) suggests, “Whiteness is a problem of being shaped to think that other people are the problem” (p. 38). This diagnosis has significant implications for how higher education scholars address the apparent crises of today.

In order to discern these implications, in the following three sections, I re-read selected eras of US higher education history in order to trace the connections between its ‘shine’ and ‘shadow,’ and to consider how and why these connections are often obfuscated. The episodic style is partly inspired by Mustafa’s (2017) generative practice of reading anti-Black violence and Black life-making practices alongside each other in three eras of US higher education history.

Before I proceed, I note the risk of reproducing what Tuck (2009) describes as “damage-centered” narratives that take “a pathologizing approach in which the oppression singularly defines a community” as part of an effort to document “harm or injury in order to achieve reparation” (p. 411). Damage-centred research frames Indigenous and racialized communities as if they were defined by the violence that has been enacted against them by white individuals and institutions. Tuck suggests that one antidote to this framing is for marginalized communities to create “desire-based research” that is “concerned with understanding complexity, contradiction, and the self-determination of lived lives” (p. 416). Mustafa (2017) models this approach, describing “practices of Black life-making” as “creative spaces of possibility and freedom Black people produce when practicing self-definition, self-care, and resistance” (p. 712). In this article, I take another approach, effectively producing a “damage-centered” narrative of whiteness. While individual white people are just as complex and contradictory as any others, whiteness itself is premised on a system of domination that is primarily defined by and owes its existence to violence against those whom it oppresses. Merely flipping inherited scripts will not lead to transformation, but it may help to clarify the limits of those scripts and to gesture toward the possibility and necessity of different ones, and thus, different futures.

COLONIAL ERA

The power of sanctioned disavowal becomes evident if one considers that, although the earliest era of US higher education is commonly called “the colonial era”, the role of colonization in higher education history is rarely addressed, let alone centered in our analyses. As Wilder (2013) documents, “The fate of the American college had been intertwined from its beginning with the social project of dispossessing Indian people” (p. 150). Further, Indigenous dispossession is not limited to the “colonial era,” but rather continues to this day. As Lipe (2018) notes, “Every university in the United States of America and Hawai’i is situated on Indigenous land” (p. 164). The exact circumstances of how individual institutions obtained the title to those lands varies, but it is feasible to discern the colonial origins of any land title. The fact that most institutions do not do so points to investments in unknowing their own colonial histories (Vimalassery, Pegues & Goldstein, 2017). Indeed, if universities were to not only trace their colonial histories, but also take seriously the responsibilities that follow from those histories and from ongoing conditions of colonial occupation, this would throw into question the literal and metaphorical grounds on which they stand, which might explain why good faith institutional engagements with the full implications of colonization are so few.

Beyond the general implications of the material fact that no US institution would exist were it not for the original and ongoing occupation of Indigenous lands, there are specific histories that suggest colonization was an economic condition of possibility for colleges in the colonial era. Wilder (2013) carefully traces many of these connections, and his work was preceded by Wright's (1988) scholarship on how colonial colleges like Harvard, William and Mary, and Dartmouth instrumentalized the cause of Indigenous religious conversion to raise funds. Although many colonists were indeed committed to conversion, motivated by notions of Christian supremacy, European presence was more about seizing lands and securing profits than religion. However, institutional fundraisers took advantage of others' missionary moral imperative (in the colonies and in Europe) to raise funds for Indigenous 'education' that ultimately went primarily to fund the higher education of European settler students. Wright (1988) concluded that colonists sought to "further their own political, economic and educational agendas, which included Indian education as an ancillary aim at best, while all the time professing their own piety as if this were their singular motivation" (p. 78). Even if the fundraisers' motivations had been purely missionary, that would not have made them any less colonial, but Indigenous peoples were clearly leveraged to help make early institutions financially viable.

Without collapsing important differences, we might ask if contemporary institutional efforts to 'celebrate' diversity in superficial and conditional ways serve a similarly strategic purpose. Ahmed (2012) and others have suggested that vocal commitments to marginalized populations are often deployed to bolster or mend universities' reputations without being accompanied by substantive commitments to actually serve those populations, or dismantle institutionalized structures of domination. This dynamic is evident in many institutions' apologies for their role in slavery, which I consider next.

Wilder (2013) meticulously documents how "The first five colleges in the British American colonies...were instruments of Christian expansionism, weapons for the conquest of indigenous peoples, and major beneficiaries of the African slave trade and slavery" (p. 17). Many other schools were also implicated in slavery. As Clarke and Fine (2010) note, "We can assume that most institutions of higher education founded prior to emancipation will have some connections to answer to, whether they have currently began the process of exploration or not" (p. 84). These "connections" are varied, and include: institutional ownership of slaves; the use of enslaved laborers to build and serve institutions; students, faculty, administrators, and trustees who were enslavers and slave-traders; acceptance of donations from those involved in the transatlantic slavery economy and "triangle trade," such as merchants, insurers, shippers, investors, and plantation owners; and the production of knowledge that rationalized "scientific racism" as proof of non-white inferiority (Wilder, 2013). In the case of many apologies, these histories initially came to light and/or were given institutional attention because of the research and pressure of activists, academics, and students. The subsequent apologies and acknowledgements vary somewhat in tone and content, but thus far the majority of responses are largely symbolic and educational, with few substantive material commitments.

One of the most celebrated institutional responses has been from Georgetown University, whose early operations were funded by a Jesuit-owned plantation where enslaved Black people were forced to labor. The sale and subsequent separation of 272 of these people in 1838 saved the institution from financial ruin. In 2016, the university announced plans to name two buildings after Black Americans, grant preferred admissions to applicants descended from people known to have been enslaved by the university, and create an Institute for Racial Justice. Yet, as McMillan Cottom (2016) points out, and against what some others have claimed, this does not constitute reparations. Although it is no simple thing to determine what would constitute justice in the continued wake of Black chattel slavery (Sharpe, 2016), what *is* simple is that Georgetown, and many other institutions like it, would likely not exist without their deep involvements in slavery. What ethical, political, and economic obligations arise from this fact? Paradoxically, the typical cycle of institutional apologies forecloses, or at least significantly circumscribes, conversations about precisely these kinds of questions. In general, the pattern is that specific wrongs, framed as limited to a particular moment in time, are named and apologized for, and some minor memorialization on campus is enacted, often with an educational

emphasis. A shameful but apparently isolated chapter of the institutional history is opened briefly, only to be quickly shut again so that a proud organizational saga can be reaffirmed. Meanwhile, deep institutional structures of racial-colonial capitalism remain basically untouched.

The educational dimension of these apologies is particularly interesting in that, on the surface, it appears to be a fitting and potentially fruitful mode of response. Clarke and Fine (2010) suggest, “The structure and goal of the university are uniquely able to facilitate a process of apology. Unlike other institutions, the academy claims to be a center of discussion and debate. The professed goal of the academy is to arm students with tools of analysis – tools that can be put to use asking questions, observing, and creating conclusions about the world” (p. 85). The same might be said of the institute established by Georgetown, and efforts of schools that are a part of the “Universities Studying Slavery” group that “allows participating institutions to work together as they address both historical and contemporary issues dealing with race and inequality in higher education and in university communities as well as the complicated legacies of slavery in modern American society” (<http://slavery.virginia.edu/universities-studying-slavery/>).

Without diminishing the transformative potential of education, it is important to consider how investments in the power of knowledge often fail to consider how universities’ knowledge was and continues to be used to justify colonial hierarchies of human value, and the workings of racial-colonial capitalism (Mustaffa, 2017; Patton, 2016; Wilder, 2013; Wynter, 2003). Beyond this, there are significant conditions placed on the kinds of knowledge that are sanctioned by institutions, and the kinds of questions that can be asked about implications of the past for the present – or at least, the kinds of questions that will be taken seriously (Stein, 2016). Many dismissive administrative responses to the demands of student activists who seek to link the past to the present attest to these limits.

In the recent surge of institutional apologies, slavery has generally received more attention than colonialism, with the exception of University of Denver’s and Northwestern University’s investigations of the role of shared founder John Evans in the Sand Creek Massacre (Straton, 2017). Yet, slavery and colonialism are deeply intertwined. As Wilder (2013) notes, “The slave trade and enslaved labor sustained thriving economies that closed the gaps between the European outposts, constricted the boundaries of Indian country, and ultimately toppled sovereign Native Nations” (p. 115). Indigenous peoples have never stopped resisting colonialism, just as Black peoples have never stopped resisting enslavement and its anti-Black afterlife, but the forced labor of enslaved peoples was one factor in enabling settler governments, companies, individuals, and institutions – including early universities – to expand and secure their claims to Indigenous land (King, 2016). In subsequent eras, colonial expansionism continued to serve as a condition of possibility for US higher education.

LAND-GRANT LEGISLATION

The Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862 emerged in the context of larger social transformations that shifted the hegemony of merchant capital to industrial capital (Paschal, 2016). It granted 30,000 acres of federal public lands per state senator and representative to then be sold and invested in the capitalist market in order to fund “the endowment, support, and maintenance of at least one college.”

According to Geiger (2014), the original Morrill Act “immediately affected the expansion and structure of higher education and, eventually, the productivity of the American economy” (p. 281). Land-grant colleges and universities are commonly framed as symbols of American progress that expanded access to higher education in order to meet the needs of the U.S.’s “growing democracy” (Key, 1996, p. 197). However, revisionist historians have critiqued the “romantic school” of land-grant history, noting the political and economic motivations that drove the legislation. Williams (1991) contends, “most historians agree that educational concerns were outweighed by socio-political factors, particularly agrarian discontent and the incipient industrial movement” (p. 13). Beyond the underlying rationales for the legislation, political and economic emphases are evident in the outcomes as well, as Sorber and Geiger (2014) point out that the Act initially did very little to extend access to higher edu-

cation beyond the (predominantly white) middle- and upper-classes. Yet even as revisionist accounts attend to the political economic rationales for the legislation and the middle-class centrism of the early land-grant institutions, they fail to identify the colonial processes that underwrote this legislation. As I establish below, the removal of Indigenous peoples from their territories in the decades leading up to the first Morrill Act enabled the US government to accumulate the “public” lands it then dispersed to the states (see Stein, 2017, for a more detailed exposition of this argument).

US westward expansion during the century following the Revolutionary War was premised on the notion that the continent had yet to be properly “civilized” (Miller, 2005). Indigenous removal was largely taken for granted by US founders, and in popular discourses. According to Silva (2007), “the ‘original’ [i.e. Indigenous] inhabitants of the American space were written as those whose obliteration enabled the actualization of the U.S. American subject” (p. 206). The colonial presumption of inevitable Indigenous removal to make space for European settlement is also evident in whitestream histories of higher education. For instance, Cohen and Kisker (2009) suggest, “the major peculiarity of the North American continent – its limitless land – influenced the way that the colonies and eventually the nation developed” (p. 17). This not only reproduces the myth that the continent was *terra nullius*, or “nobody’s land”, thereby erasing Indigenous presence and naturalizing Indigenous disappearance, it also indicates that colonialism was a central condition of possibility for US development, and, by extension, for the development of US higher education. In turn, higher education was understood as a means to ensure “civilized society in frontier communities” (p. 23), and indeed “Colleges were often founded right on the frontier line” (Sedlak, as cited by Goodchild and Wrobel, 2014, p. 5). Meanwhile, Cohen and Kisker (2009) describe Indigenous peoples as threats during this era of higher education history, dangerous to settlers “living in a land where the wilderness and potentially hostile natives lurked just outside” (pp. 15-16). In this account, Indigenous peoples are painted as sources of potential violence, while the actual violence of colonial settlement is invisibilized.

By removing Indigenous peoples from their lands during the first 75 years of its existence, the US federal government nearly tripled the size of its original territory by 1850 (Frymer, 2014). The expansion, accumulation, and settlement of western lands was made possible through: wars and treaties with Indigenous nations (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014); treaties with Britain, France, Mexico, and Spain to gain access to the Indigenous lands they had already colonized; and government policies that promoted westward expansion (Frymer, 2014). Regardless of the method of their accumulation by the US, all of these lands were, and remain, Indigenous territories (Rifkin, 2013). The value of the accumulated lands “was probably greater than everything that was owned in the private sector” (Cohen & Kisker, 2009, p. 60). Initially, Congress sold these lands to generate revenues to pay off national debts, but in 1820s and 1830s started to shift its emphasis to promoting “settlement and national development” (Key, 1996, p. 207), which led to the dispersal of land grants, including those of the Morrill Act, as well as the Homestead Act and the Pacific Railroad Act, all of which passed in 1862. Directly linking the colonial history of US land accumulation to lands dispensed through the Morrill Act suggests that public goods are as entangled with racial-colonial violence as private goods.

Thus, although Indigenous removal was not enacted with the direct intent of founding land-grant institutions, these institutions would not exist without it. In other words, land-grant institutions have an indirect but dependent relationship with colonial dispossession (Stein, 2017). Beyond its more immediate colonial entanglements, the Morrill Act also helped to ultimately expand the industrial iteration of racial-colonial capitalism by training employees, supporting industrial and mechanized agricultural research, and in general, encouraging further settlement of western lands in the late 19th century. The imperative to “pioneer progress” and “conquer the frontier” subsequently became embedded in higher education discourse; it was later echoed in Cold War era notions of science as “the endless frontier,” and in contemporary discourses of internationalization (Stein, 2017).

The wages of whiteness are also evident in land-grant legislation, as it was not until nearly the second Morrill Act in 1890 that Black southerners were granted expanded educational access through the creation of Black land-grant schools, and even then, funding for these historically-black institutions

has never equaled that of their historically-white peer institutions. (Schools founded by the second Morrill Act were funded directly, not through literal grants of land.) Meanwhile, Black students faced discrimination at Northern land-grant institutions (Sorber & Geiger, 2014). It was not until 1994 that the US government designated tribal colleges and universities as land-grant institutions.

Reviewing the racial-colonial capitalist underside of land-grant history challenges the supposed universalism of higher education for the “public good.” Land-grant institutions were financially secured through processes of colonization, and then access to them was further racialized in ways that continued to perpetuate white supremacy. This racialization of institutional access is also clearly evident within the “golden age” of higher education, which I review next.

THE “GOLDEN AGE”

No era of US higher education is more celebrated than the post-World War II “golden age”, which I date from the 1940s to the 1970s. During this time, the US was an unrivalled global economic superpower, as Europe was decimated by war and much of the rest of the world was still struggling for independence from European colonialism. A booming economy resulted in growing opportunities for domestic social mobility. Alongside strong economic growth, there was support for high taxes to fund social services, a holdover from two wars and the New Deal. As access to higher education expanded, Marginson (2016) suggests it was “widely agreed that the fairest and best means of sorting the continuing competition for social position and success were higher education and the nexus between education and professional occupations” (p. 15). However, in this section I trace how the expansion of higher education access and the accompanying promise of merit-based social mobility was facilitated through institutional stratification, and how historically high levels of public funding were dependent on a commitment to ensure that the US remain a global military and economic hegemon (Labaree, 2016). This means that the shine of the “golden age” was dependent on the shadows of a nationalistic militarism, and the promise of formal equality of opportunity that functioned to “explain (away) the inequalities of a still-racialized capitalism” (Melamed, 2006, p. 9).

Although the Serviceman’s Readjustment Act of 1944, known as the GI Bill, was formally open to all races, and indeed it enabled some Black veterans to move into the middle class, according to Katznelson (2005), “there was no greater instrument for widening an already huge racial gap in postwar America” (p. 121). In addition to the fact that Black people were underrepresented in the military and thus underrepresented among veterans because fewer qualified for service via racialized entry tests, the federal government left responsibility for the bill’s implementation to local governments, which effectively meant that, particularly in the formally segregated south (where most Black veterans lived), Black veterans had difficulty accessing benefits, because of the racist treatment of white staff but also because there was not sufficient capacity and resources in historically Black colleges to absorb students. The GI Bill is only one example of how the expansion of access in this era was accompanied by an underside of racialized economic stratification, which continued even after Jim Crow laws were repealed. For instance, it is also clearly evident in the celebrated California Master Plan and its three tiers of access (community colleges, state colleges, and universities).

Kerr (1978), one of the key developers of the California Master Plan, noted that even as the plan expanded opportunity, it was never meant to diminish social difference or eliminate inequality of outcomes: “I considered the vast expansion of the community colleges to be the first line of defense for the University of California as an institution of international academic renown. Otherwise, the University was either going to be overwhelmed by large numbers of students with lower academic attainments or attacked as trying to hold on to a monopoly over entry into higher status” (p. 267). While Kerr does not directly invoke race, the threatening figure of the “overwhelming,” undeserving, and thereby polluting, masses is an implicitly racialized one. The plan was designed such that, as overall access increased, so did institutional stratification, resulting in revised hierarchies that were now rationalized through the notion of merit-based rewards (Marginson, 2016).

Today, stratification continues to be a hallmark of US higher education. For instance, McMillan Cottom (2017) argues that elite institutions benefit from the expansion of the “subsector of high-risk postsecondary schools and colleges that...absorbs all manner of vulnerable groups” (p. 11), because this arrangement preserves the guise of open educational opportunity as an engine of social equality while unequal outcomes are framed as the product of individual talent and effort.

The promise of equal opportunity in the “golden age” can be understood in part as an effort to manage and contain more radical demands for institutional transformation and redistribution as redress for centuries of racialized economic expropriation and political domination (Ferguson, 2012; Silva, 2016). However, inclusion was conditional upon allegiance to American “interests”, which in turn rationalized the disciplining of those individuals and groups whose intentions or demands could be deemed “un-American.” Those who rejected conditional inclusion and sought deeper change were often punished or even murdered by the state (Ferguson, 2012; Mustaffa, 2017). Further, while equal opportunity supposedly vindicated the benevolence of the settler colonial state (Byrd, 2011), at this time the US sought to further the project of Indigenous assimilation and privatize millions of acres of collectively held Indigenous lands through “Indian termination” policies from the 1940s through the 60s, which ended federal recognition (and financial support) of over 100 tribes (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014), and through legislation that sought to relocate Indigenous peoples from reservations to cities.

The institutionalization of formal racial equality in this era has also been understood as an effort to distance the US from Nazi racism and position itself as a more righteous and egalitarian global superpower than its competing global superpower, the USSR (Bell, 1976; Ferguson, 2012; Labaree, 2016). The US could absorb at least some internal and external critiques of its white supremacist legacies and the excesses of capitalism while the resulting “nonredistributive antiracism” served as ideological cover for the expansion of US-led racial-colonial capitalism both at home *and* abroad (Melamed, 2006, p. 4). This then points to the other shadow of the golden age’s shine, which is that it was subsidized by the expansion of US global hegemony and militarism.

Kramer (2016), citing Rosenberg, notes that even before World War II, the US had developed “many of the state-corporate arrangements” that would enable its post-War global economic dominance: “a promotional state oriented toward aiding US corporate expansion into foreign markets, American companies abroad as instruments of U.S. foreign policy, and developmentalist ideologies that fused capitalism and social evolution under the banner of American exceptionalism” (p. 335). Post-War US political and economy hegemony appeared natural within the persistent colonial hierarchy of humanity, and the country’s presumptive benevolence and moral leadership were thought by many to justify its position (Melamed, 2006).

In higher education, US universities conceptualized their offerings of technical assistance and educational ‘capacity building’ programs as forms of development aid in ways that, often undemocratically, supported large-scale social, political, and economic transformations in recipient countries. For instance, according to Gonzalez (1982), the US Agency for International Development (USAID) “established 134 contracts with 71 universities and institutes to carry out research and planning for the implementation of reform in 40 countries” (p. 332). Other examples include State Department-funded anti-communist operations in Vietnam run by Michigan State University professors (Kuzmarov, 2009). The recruitment of international students was also considered a form of development aid that would prepare future leaders of other nations while ensuring their sympathies with US policies and values (Kramer, 2009). In addition to the desire to stem the spread of communism in places where it was gaining traction, these international efforts were tightly tied to the imperial ends of expanding capitalist (and specifically, US) markets in poorer countries, all while disavowing any responsibility for the role of the West in creating that poverty (Kramer, 2016).

In this era, US universities received unprecedented federal funding to support the development of military technologies, weapons, and intelligence (Cohen & Kisker, 2009), which resulted in the emergence of what Senator William Fulbright described as the “military-academic-industrial complex.”

While much militarily focused, federally funded research emphasized science and technology, social sciences and humanities research was also supported by the Cold War funding apparatus (Barkan, 2013; Kamola, 2014). Certainly, there was resistance to the mobilization of scholarship toward militarized ends, just as there were efforts to demand more than the era's "nonredistributive antiracism." Often, these critiques and demands were articulated together, as analytical and political connections were made between historical and ongoing racial and colonial violence at home and abroad (Ferguson, 2012). However, scholarship that made these connections was disciplined and underfunded (Chatterjee & Maira, 2014), and related student demands were met with force, and/or later co-opted in the process of their institutionalization (Ferguson, 2012; Mitchell, 2016).

Ultimately, during the golden age of higher education, the US was a "welfare-warfare" state (Gilmore, 2007) in which a more democratic but still racialized distribution of capitalist wealth domestically depended on hegemony abroad. Further, US Cold War militarism was not restricted to efforts to 'contain' communist expansion through deterrence and the generation of global 'good will'. It also entailed overt and covert interventions in sovereign nations in order to assert US influence and stop political movements that the US perceived to be threatening, including US-supported coups and assassinations in Chile, Iran, Egypt, Guatemala, Brazil, the Congo, and elsewhere, and overt military campaigns in Korea and Vietnam (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014; Grossman, n.d.).

Even those who link high levels of public funding for higher education to the Cold War rarely attend to the harmful costs of the US's political and economic hegemony. For instance, Newfield (2016) suggests federal funding for military research in higher education was driven by a concern for the public good: "universities lost money on this research...[but] this was a public service that they were expected to perform, and public universities could afford to subsidize it with Cold War levels of state funding" (p. 40). Perhaps because Newfield is (understandably) concerned to defend the public good in the current context of austerity, he fails to problematize the equation of militarism with the public good. Also acknowledging the central role of the Cold War in rationalizing public funding during this era, Labaree (2016) argues that there is no going back, and suggests, "we should just say thanks to the bomb for all that it did for us and move on" (p. 115). Although "the bomb" here is a metonym for the Cold War as a whole, and makes lighthearted reference to the dark comedy *Dr. Strangelove*, this statement nonetheless signals a stark disavowal of the real violence of the Cold War in general, and of nuclear bombs in particular. The latter affected the hundreds of thousands of Japanese people who died or were harmed by atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II, as well as the toxic legacies of uranium mining in Diné/Navajo and Dene territories, and enduring environmental contamination from nuclear testing in the Pacific that has resulted in high levels of cancer and other harmful health outcomes in the Marshall Islands and elsewhere (Cornum, 2018).

DISCUSSION

It is easy to become overwhelmed by the enormity of contemporary challenges in higher education, and it is perhaps for this reason that some people look back longingly at previous eras in their diagnosis of the present. Two themes in particular often recur: "reclaiming" the public good; and reanimating interrupted progress. However, my review of three historical eras suggests that these themes are premised on harmful illusions and investments in shiny promises with shadowy undersides.

THE PUBLIC GOOD

In the context of liberal capitalist democracies like the US, conceptions of the public good have never been antagonistic to capitalist growth, although these conceptions change in response to political economic shifts (Marginson, 2007). Beyond the fact that it fails to fundamentally challenge capitalist imperatives, the meaning of the public good is premised on particular ideas about who constitutes "the public." For instance, the original Morrill Act supported the industrial economy, but the primary beneficiaries were white industrial capitalists who received trained workers, and to a lesser extent, the primarily white, upper-/middle-class students who attended these schools. If we hold that this legis-

lation served the public good, then that would mean defining “the public” as the white upper and middle classes. Similarly, within the post-War era, although higher education’s support of US global hegemony and economic growth were considered to be in the service of the public good, it was wealthy people and business owners who benefitted the most, and then those primarily white people who were able to stay in and move into the middle class (Katznelson, 2005). Efforts to create a more racially inclusive ‘public’ were conditioned by a geopolitical context in which the US sought to appear progressive on a global stage where socialism offered a tangible alternative – a context that has arguably disappeared, and with it, the strategic imperative of egalitarianism.

In addition to questions about who was included in the “public,” we must also ask: at whose expense was the public good secured? Attending to the underside of US higher education history suggests that, rather than a set of unfulfilled universal benefits that are subsequently fulfilled through incremental inclusion, the “public good” has generally operated as a racialized, gendered, and classed set of securities and services that fail to disrupt (and in many cases, are rooted in) the wealth and power that have been generated and accumulated through processes of racial-colonial capitalist exploitation and expropriation. Thus, Rodriguez (2012) suggests, “the fundamental problem is not that some are excluded from the hegemonic centers of the academy but that the university (as a specific institutional site) and academy (as a shifting material network) themselves cannot be disentangled from the long historical apparatuses of genocidal and protogenocidal social organization” (p. 812).

The implication here is not that higher education scholars should discard their strategic advocacy for the public good in the context of increasingly privatized institutions, nor give up on demands for more expansive notions of access and inclusion; nor is it to suggest that nothing good has come out of the history of higher education. At the same time, it is not possible to neatly separate the good and bad of its foundations and keep only the “good.” Instead, it is necessary to ask not only who is the “public,” and who has the power to decide what is “good,” but also, who bears the costs of achieving this “good”? And, how might ideas about who constitutes the “public,” and what is considered “good,” be radically reimagined? For instance, what would higher education look like if we imagined the public outside of the colonial nation-state, or prosperity outside of capitalism?

PROMISES OF PROGRESS

Many critiques of the present presume that US higher education has historically progressed in a linear way, becoming more accessible, democratic, and inclusive over time. Within this narrative, the present moment is a temporary, if troubling, interruption of otherwise steady progress.

Not unlike narratives of the public good, narratives of “progress interrupted” tend to romanticize the past, diagnosing the present as the product of an unfulfilled promise (Newfield, 2008). This framing fails to account for the externalized and invisibilized costs of progress already gestured to in my discussion of the public good. Indeed, great harm has often been rationalized in the name of educational progress, including extractive research relationships with Indigenous and racialized communities, gentrification of areas surrounding institutions, and the erasure and invalidation of non-European knowledge systems.

Progress-oriented framing also fails to attend to the underlying continuities of racial-colonial capitalism, taking the guise of formal commitments to equity and inclusion at face value, rather than considering how these commitments generally fail to interrupt the reproduction and naturalization of epistemic and economic domination. Narratives of progress can also function to manage expectations and demands, suggesting that people simply need to be patient and change will come, while ignoring the fact that many of the changes that have been historically achieved in higher education would not have occurred without significant struggle and conflict.

Finally, narratives of linear progress tend to presume that there is only one way forward, which is often determined by those with the most power. This invalidates alternative possibilities, particularly those that are unimaginable from within modern/colonial ways of thinking, and thereby paternalisti-

cally deems populations with other visions of change to be lacking and in need of external leadership.

Those invested in the progress narrative of higher education tend to frame the present as a failure as if something has gone awry in an otherwise benevolent system. As Byrd (2018) notes, this kind of narrative “reads white precarity and dispossession through the normalization of Black and Indigenous precarity and dispossession” in ways that suggest it is unacceptable that white people are now experiencing (to a much lesser degree) some of the same vulnerabilities and a violence that Black, Indigenous, and other racialized people have always experienced (p. 125). By contrast, from the perspective of a critique of racial-colonial capitalism, the present is not an aberration, but rather the latest (and perhaps, last?) iteration and extension of a fundamentally unethical and unsustainable higher education system. This approach suggests that current crises have made existing harms more visible, and harder to deny. Now that not only the economic wages but also the psychic and public wages of whiteness may be producing “diminishing returns” (Tu & Singh, 2018), and the shiny promises of US exceptionalism appear dimmer, the inherent limits of our higher education system potentially come into view. The question that remains is: Can our institutions “right the wrongs that brought them into being” (Belcourt, 2018)? And what should be the role of higher education scholars in doing this work? I gesture toward some of the challenges of transformation in the conclusion.

CONCLUSION

The above efforts to weave often-segregated histories together in order to offer a different diagnosis of the present are admittedly partial, and only gesture to the multi-vocal, multi-layered work that is necessary in order to rethink the foundations of higher education as both a set of institutions and a field of study. Recent developments, like ACPA’s new “Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization,” and accompanying syllabus, along with the 2018 ASHE Annual Meeting theme, “Envisioning the ‘Woke’ Academy,” suggest that there may be more openings than ever before within the field to confront the racial-colonial entanglements of US higher education.

Although rethinking a field’s foundations holds enormous transformative potential, Mawhinny cautions that efforts to crack hegemony often prompt “moves to innocence,” or “strategies to remove involvement in and culpability for systems of domination” (as cited by Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9). Once the presumption of individual or institutional innocence that was previously sustained by sanctioned disavowal is lost, there may be a desire to redeem or restore it, which can foreclose opportunities to identify and engage with the full extent and implications of colonial continuities. In higher education, these “moves to innocence” can take many forms; below I consider six common moves:

1) *Framing violence as a mistake or failure*: Histories of violence are diagnosed as unfortunate failures to extend the otherwise universal benefits and accomplishments of US higher education more widely. The proposition that follows is to include more people within the existing system. In contrast to narratives of harm-as-exclusion, if violence served (and continues to serve) as the condition of possibility for these supposedly universal benefits and accomplishments, then extending them to more people would itself not uproot the underlying violence that sustains our institutions.

2) *Attributing violence to external factors*: It is argued that universities are not themselves directly responsible for the violence that have permeated US society, and therefore, do not bear significant political or ethical responsibility for their complicity in them. Similarly, some responses suggest that implicated institutions were simply acting according to the “social mores of the time”; such responses effectively centre dominant white perspectives from earlier eras, while ignoring that, at the very same time, Indigenous and Black people were critiquing and resisting the subjugation rationalized by those perspectives.

3) *Insisting violence was an isolated event*: Racial-colonial violence is addressed as if it was made up of discrete events or moments rather than enduring epistemological and ontological

structures that continue to shape the present (Sharpe, 2016; Shotwell, 2016). Framing this violence as a set of regrettable past events that have little implication for the present both denies the fact of continued harm and presumes the inevitability of its further continuation (Vimalassery, Pegues & Goldstein, 2017).

4) *Demanding immediate re/solution*: Challenges to existing modes of higher education are met with a demand that those offering the critique provide a solution or alternative system that will ensure a quick resolution and return to certainty. This not only often places the onus of change on marginalized populations, it also fails to consider the deep and messy challenges that are involved in unmaking entrenched hierarchies. It also presumes that we can know in advance what a truly different system might look like, without considering that, if we planned it from where we are now, we might imagine and create more of the same.

5) *Deeming alternatives unrealistic*: Even when solutions or alternatives are posed, if they challenge dominant structures and subjectivities, they are often deemed to be unreasonable, unrealistic, unhelpful, and “idealistic.” Thus, it becomes necessary to ask: what makes these possibilities seem unrealistic, what has made our present social organization seem inevitable, and what would be required to undo these presumptions? Furthermore, we might ask, is it ‘realistic’ to continue with the system we have, given the range of serious political, economic, and ecological challenges to its long-term sustainability?

6) *Offering critique as immunization from complicity*: Sometimes, offering a critique of injustice can be instrumentalized as part of an effort to position oneself outside of complicity in that injustice. This distancing move ignores the structural dimension of complicity and thereby fails to confront “the extent to which we are made by that which we seek to oppose” (Mitchell, 2015, p. 91). Instead, it presumes that we can retreat to a morally pure space where we are not implicated in the problems we critique. Yet, as Mitchell (2015) points out, “There is nothing about our position in the academy, however marginal, that is innocent of power, nor is there any practice that will afford us an exteriority to the historical determinations of the place from which we speak, write, research, teach, organize, and learn” (p. 92).

The denial of complicity in harm that is evident in these moves to innocence is in many ways constitutive of white subjectivities and institutions. As Shotwell (2016) argues, “That feeling, of wanting to be people un-moored from history, of endorsing the pretense that we have nothing to do with the past that constitutes our material conditions and our most intimate subjectivities, is a feeling that defines [white people]” (p. 38). If this is the case, then the problem we face is not only one of ignorance: “[w]e don’t just have a knowledge problem – we have a habit-of-being problem” (p. 38).

In other words, if racial-colonial violence is the enabling condition of both whiteness and capitalism, then even the most compelling account of historical and ongoing harm in higher education will be necessary but likely insufficient for the task of unsettling whitestream ways of knowing and being, and undoing the still-unfolding disaster of the colonial ordering of the world. Further, naming instances when we and others are engaged in moves to innocence is important, but that alone does not necessarily affect an interruption of the desire for innocence that underlies those moves in the first place.

Given these many layers of resistance, how might higher education scholars and practitioners conceptualize “forward-looking responsibility”? If we want to address the deepest challenges of the present, then we will need to not only to educate ourselves about histories of violence, but also work through the intellectual and affective resistances that arise when these histories are evoked, and their full implications are examined. This will mean not only naming but also committing to unraveling the fragilities, insecurities, and investments that are activated when we are confronted with our own role in creating harm (DiAngelo, 2011). We will need to develop the stamina to engage in uncomfortable, self-implicated conversations, and we will need to do this work without having a roadmap of where to go, and without running away from complexity, contradictions, and the fact of our differentially distribut-

ed complicities. Shotwell (2016) suggests, “Since it is not possible to avoid complicity, we do better to start from an assumption that everyone is implicated in situations we (at least in some way) repudiate” (pp. 4-5). The exact nature of this work will, of course, vary depending on our contexts, positionalities, professional roles, and perspectives. However, if higher education scholars and practitioners want to enable different futures, then this work cannot be premised on a presumption of our own epistemic privilege, moral authority, or on the futurity of our field, our institutions, or even the selves that we think we are. Rather, these are precisely the structures, subjectivities, and certainties that need to be confronted and questioned, so that new possibilities can emerge.

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