Critical Exchange

Epistemic Oppression, Resistance, and Resurgence

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Moving Beyond Epistemic Oppression

Nora Berenstain & Elena Ruíz

Epistemologies have power. They have the power not only to transform worlds, but to create them. And the worlds that they create can be better or worse. For many people, the worlds they create are predictably and reliably deadly. Epistemologies can turn sacred land into 'resources' to be bought, sold, exploited, and exhausted. They can turn people into 'labor' in much the same way. They can not only disappear acts of violence but render them unnamable and unrecognizable within their conceptual architectures. They can portray intentionally produced structural harms as 'tragic' and unforeseeable acts of fate (Ruíz, forthcoming). The

can re-vision deliberate genocides as the inevitable and irreversible costs of the march toward 'progress' in the linear hierarchy of civilizations. Colonial epistemologies can remove peoples from their lands and lands from their peoples, and then disappear the acts of violence they perform by suggesting that things couldn't have been any other way. They can reliably promote and produce Black, Brown, and Indigenous death and obscure their role in its production under the guise of procedural fairness. All of this, as Kristie Dotson conceives it, is the work of epistemology as 'bad magic'.

In worlds terraformed by colonial epistemologies and their corresponding generation of normative practices, the production of epistemic oppression is the default. This is not a tragic turn of 'epistemic bad luck' or the chancy result of marginalized social groups 'slipping through the cracks' of an inhospitable public discourse. Dotson (2014, 2018) created the concept of epistemic oppression to theorize the ways that specific populations are suppressed in their power to contribute to shared epistemic resources, adding a new domain of inquiry and explanatory power to the rich tradition of anti-colonial theory on epistemic violence (Spivak, 1988; Mohanty, 1988; Quijano, 2000; Sousa Santos, 2014). Dotson's account of epistemic oppression is both self-consciously Black feminist and fundamentally structural in that it recognizes that the *injustice* of epistemic injustice is not the exception but the rule in colonial epistemologies. The injustice goes all the way down in the systems that produce it – and it does so, for the most part, *by design*.

Settler systems of epistemic and conceptual resources and the relations among them are constructed to preclude certain forms of knowledge. This is not an accident; it is a central goal of colonial violence. Colonization and land dispossession would not be possible without the violent disruption of Indigenous knowledge systems and ongoing organized attempts to disrupt their survival. Embodied ways of knowing, spiritual ways of knowing, land-based ways of knowing – these are all forms of knowledge that are violently foreclosed in the name of settler futurity. Dispossessive practices create and are reinforced by settler knowledge systems that generate epistemic oppression as a matter of course. To separate a people from the land that bore them, that raised them, that cares for them is not only an act of violence – it is an act of violence that cannot be achieved without the tools of epistemic warfare. Colonizers have

fought and continue to fight the war of colonization with a multitude of brutal offensives. While the processes and practices of settler colonialism are as diverse as the lands they have occupied and conquered, a commonality that arises among these variegated techniques of violence is that colonization is, in large part, an epistemic project.

As the work of Silva (2004) and Kauanui (2018) reveals, the range of practices used by the early settler colonizers of Hawaiʻi illustrates the epistemic character of the tools in the colonial arsenal. Such practices included the suppression of ʻōlelo Hawai'i (the Hawaiian language), the imposition of restrictive Christian heteropatriarchial marriage as the only context for the expression of sexual intimacy, and the forced translation and flattening of rich multi-faceted concepts from Hawaiian epistemology such as 'pono' (goodness, justice, balance, harmony) into the Christian theological notion of 'righteousness' by missionary colonizers with a vested interest in divesting Hawaiians of their land – and divesting Hawaiian lands of their people. Linguistic colonization is often narrowly construed so as to exclude epistemic warfare and encroachment. Indigenous peoples have long known that language is not reducible to mere speech acts or propositional structures. Like the land one inhabits, languages are living. They are world-enabling formations that hold sacred relations together or bring them into balance within a larger cosmology. To sever people from their language is a strategy of warfare aimed at producing death. Linguistic colonization is thus not about destroying *words*, it is about destroying *worlds*. It is what Ruíz (2020) calls *hermeneutic violence*—a colonial technique developed to harm and destroy Indigenous systems of meaning and interpretation so they can be forcibly replaced with colonial governance structures.

When Indigenous governance practices are transformed or replaced in this way, it is often by systems that import subordinating binaries of gender and sexuality as a vehicle of colonial heteropatriarchy. When colonization disrupted political structures based on kin relations in some Andean regions, social organization took on rigid parameters by associating individual kin groups with specific ayllus. This meant that those who came from certain lines of ancestors (*lluacuás*) had far greater prestige than those who did not. Colonial adaptations of this particular aspect of Inca social structures had a devastating impact on Inca women of the colonial period. These consequences could not have been produced under the previously

existing system of complementarity, parity, and reciprocal dualisms that were devastated by colonial invasion. Modern-day 'machismo' in Latin America is thus not an autochthonous cultural practice but the result of a juncture that introduced deeply harmful conceptions of gender involving hierarchical subordination, adapted existing social practices in harmful ways, and prevented the collective reckoning of organic social processes that could have addressed the consolidation of group hegemony over governance systems.

Western feminisms, which purport to resist colonial heteropatriarchy, often collude with the very systems they claim to fight against. Such feminisms divest from Native women's sovereignty concerns while occupying the region's governance structures with universalized 'gender agendas' that displace alternative and Indigenous forms of governance, such as ayllu- and caracoles-based democratic political formations. White western feminisms simultaneously uphold and disappear structures of white supremacy and settler capitalism (Grande, 2003; Berenstain, 2020). They do so by re-entrenching the notion of *equality as equivalence*, which can be seamlessly integrated into existing colonial capitalist infrastructures without fundamentally challenging their distribution of power. This allows equal pay for equal work to be heralded as a feminist political goal while ignoring the ways that tools of capitalism such as transnational flows of commerce, technocratic globalized finance, and western NGOs operate in tandem with white supremacist cisheteropatriarchy. Western feminisms cover over Indigenous notions of *equality as parity* that have much longer conceptual histories and that extend diverse sacred designations to Two-Spirit and gender non-conforming people. Such Indigenous notions of equality reflect the non-exclusionary reciprocal dualisms native to Mesoamerica rather than hierarchical dualisms imposed by colonial governance structures.

Julieta Paredes's (Aymara) Communitarian Feminist approach to knowledge is one critical form of epistemic resistance to colonial heteropatriarchy, which rooted in the communal, ancestral, and land-based practices of Abya Yala's Pueblos Originales (Original Peoples). For Paredes, it is self-evident that knowledge creation is both a political practice and a collective enterprise (2009, 2010, 2016, 2020). Communitarian Feminism grounds practices of knowledge in community needs and provides both a direct form of resistance and an alternative to the epistemic tools of colonial warfare that have been imposed on the Indigenous

peoples of Qullasuyo Marka (now-called Bolivia) and on Native communities across Abya Yala (meaning 'the land in its full maturity' in Kuna) and Turtle Island. Communitarian Feminism, as a practice of collective autonomy, provides a radically different approach to addressing problems created by colonial violence than what is offered by the neoliberal framework of 'individualism'. Communitarian Feminism rejects partisan politics as a pathway to liberation, as revolutions do not come from governments. And it offers broader channels of resistance to the conceptual hegemony of colonial patriarchal oppression than the narrowly constrained approaches of western feminism.

Communitarian Feminism arises out of an epistemic matrix that is very different from that of western feminism—one borne from land-based knowledges, the capacity to hold intergenerational memory alive, and the recovery of healing pathways for maternal ancestors' struggles. Communitarian Feminism derives from procedures of parity that begin with predominantly oral exchanges and develop through a consensus process in which authorship emerges as a charge received via community mandate. Rather than being an idea attributable to a single individual, the conceptual framework of Communitarian Feminism has been worked and reworked like the folds of masa flour. Many hands work the corn from its planting to hulling to grinding, and the tortilla is stamped by the signature texture of the final hand that lays the dough on the comal. Many hands begin the work, one hand finishes. As a collective knowledge process and expression of political sovereignty, Communitarian Feminism identifies embodiment, spatiality, temporality, collective and autonomous organizing, and memory-work as five sectors (campos de acción) of central feminist concern (Paredes, 2010).

It is critical to recognize that he imposition of colonial epistemology does not just devastate and disrupt Indigenous systems of gender; it disrupts practices of *embodiment,* by introducing body part names and severing the reciprocal relation between the land one inhabits and the body through which one dwells. Colonizers damage practices of *memory*, by reducing the world-enabling generative capacities of ancestral memory to an individual's mental acts and imposing christianized regulations on such acts so they can be subjected to standards of 'faithful' remembering. Colonizers also degrade Indigenous conceptual frameworks of *time* and *space*, imposing Gregorian sequential chronologies and Euclidean

notions of divisible space on Indigenous cosmologies. Before 'parcels' of stolen land can be bought and sold, land must be seen as divisible into parts.

The connections between epistemology and governance here are non-negligible. When missionary colonizers stole Hawaiian land and water to set up sugar and pineapple plantations, they ripped out loʻi kalo (irrigated taro fields) and diverted water in an intentional act of famine creation. This allowed Haole colonizers to leverage Kanaka starvation to pressure King Kamehameha III to change the traditional system of land tenure to one of land privatization, resulting in the Māhele (land division) of 1848. Material transformations of this scale require epistemic overhauls. Lee Maracle, Sto:lo elder, poet, and scholar, describes the clash between the governance schema of Coast Salish epistemologies and the coloniality of those invoked by the settler state of Canada to justify displacement, dispossession, and extraction. She writes, 'Humans are no more entitled to privatize parts of the earth's body or militarily occupy and subdue her than they are entitled to privatize parts of another human's body. Yet, to Canada, the earth is a vast space, a space to be bought, sold, inherited, exploited, and damaged at will; a space to be tampered with without regard to earth's own interests or her willingness and ability to sustain us when we violate our agreement with her' (Maracle, 2015, p. 121). This reveals that the teleological function of settler epistemologies is to produce and protect settler structures of land theft and dispossession.

In Dotson's framework, the power of an epistemology to perform 'bad magic' is linked to its automated production of normativity generated by colonial structures of governance. What Dotson deems 'governance-coloniality' it is a central mechanism of colonial epistemic violence aimed at the destruction of Indigenous systems of self-governance. Violently disrupting the relationships of people to land is as much an epistemic project as it is a material one, and these two projects are inherently linked through settler epistemological production of governance-coloniality. Thus, the task of theorizing epistemic oppression is not *only* about epistemic oppression. Epistemic oppression is a story that gives language to a phenomenon in order to get past it, to carry on with the maintaining and reviving the forms of Indigenous and diasporic knowledge that colonialism has worked so tirelessly to corrupt and silence.

The projects generated by living in a world structured by epistemic oppression are numerous and diverse (Spillers 1984; Grande, 2003; Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill, 2013; Simpson, 2017; Dotson, 2018b; Collins, 2019). They are rooted in the disparate realities of what it means to work for and within the communities one serves. Each piece in this critical exchange plays a different role in the process of moving past the epistemic oppression wrought by colonial domination, and yet, they are in convergent conversation with one another. They all recognize that epistemology is an everyday political practice and that different kinds of resistance workers are needed in the process of undoing the damage of colonial epistemology. Each thus offers a part of a larger story—a story of differently located sovereign peoples fighting to preserve and transform their systems of knowledge in a world governed by ongoing processes of colonial devastation.

In our reading of these pieces, Dotson is a frontline defender of Black intellectual work, holding the line against the epistemic encroachment of settler colonialism that seeks to disrupt and dismiss Black intellectual thought as primitive, confused, underdeveloped, and inherently impossible. In this fight, she forges intellectual tools that can be used by a range of people fighting in solidarity against colonial white supremacy and its strategies of epistemic warfare.

Epistemologies, as Dotson (2019) theorizes them, do not solely contain outlines for what can be considered knowledge. They also generate ordered sets of steps for normative practices that are constrained and licensed by what that epistemic system deems knowledge. Colonial epistemologies, however, are adept at obscuring the links between the epistemic customs they support and the normative practices they promote and then covering their tracks by presenting their norms as the only reasonable consequences of rationally determined truths. Because of this, inhabitants of such systems often fail to recognize or comprehend observations made about what their epistemological systems license. This reveals one of the deep ironies of colonial myth-making at the heart of western political thought. No doubt, many philosophers and political theorists find absurd the idea that humans could have some sort of original agreement with the earth and see this merely as narrative mythmaking. These same theorists, however, recognize no irony when they identify their conceptual commitment to the original

agreement of social contract theory as an a priori epistemic claim rather than an instance of colonial mythmaking engaged in conjure magic.

In the face of colonial mythology about governance practices and western civilization, Julieta Paredes's piece does the work of generative refusal forged in community. She holds no patience for what Ruíz (2020) calls the cultural gaslighting project of settler colonialism or its intentional strategies of cultural theft and intellectual erasure that it employs in its effort to claim a monopoly on knowledge. Paredes makes clear that the political resistance struggles of her people and of the many original peoples of Abya Yala are not taking place within the hegemonic Eurocentric timeline that arrogantly defines Europe as modern and positions the territories devastated by European colonialism as pre-modern and lagging behind. Instead, they are rooted in the community-based knowledge and governance practices of their own societies, which have emerged and evolved within the temporal framework of their Native territories. Paredes's rejection maintains expansive space and possibility for her people to continue their collective resistance – to the 'system of planetary dominance' that has been erected in their territories – on their own terms. Her essay appears here translated into English from the Spanish original, available *here*. The necessity of communicating the collective needs and political emergencies of one's communities using colonial languages and methods such as Roman alphabetic literacy foregrounds the structural features of epistemic oppression that Paredes engages and resists in her work. Colonial mediums of knowledge exchange such as academic journals preempt the possibility of adequately expressing and representing non-western knowledge processes like those of Communitarian Feminism. Paredes's text represents an offering to engage in intra-hemispheric feminist dialogues that acknowledge land and context as they work to resist the structural nature of colonial machinery.

The collective organizational approach to anti-colonial resistance in Paredes's work provides a bridge to the collective politics that ground Noenoe K. Silva's reclamatory historical project. Such projects are intertwined with projects of epistemic resurgence that move past the settler epistemological project and its valorization of terminal narratives of hermeneutic death for Indigenous peoples. In the face of ongoing settler epistemic violence against Hawaiian knowledge, Kanaka epistemology survives and, in many respects, continues to thrive. This is

due in part to the radical resurgence work of kūpuna (elders, ancestors) and youth alike, teaching and learning by engaging in Hawaiian practices that house knowledge and maintain mutual relationships with people and land such as the practices of Kapu Aloha, aloha ʻāina, and mālama ʻāina (Aluli-Meyer 2018). It is also thanks to the reflexivity of Hawaiian epistemologies, which allows for Hawaiian knowledge practices to change and adapt to better serve the collective continuance of the lāhui Hawaiʻi (Hawaiian people/nation).

Noenoe K. Silva demonstrates some of the radical capacities and expansive possibilities of epistemic resurgence by engaging with the long Hawaiian histories of political resistance to colonization and of building and sustaining distinctly Hawaiian systems of knowledge and practices of governance. In 'The Power of the Steel-Tipped Pen,' Silva, quoting Mary Kawena Pukui, writes that 'the knowledge of Hawaiians is extraordinarily vast' (2017). Knowledge reclamation is resistance work, and keeping Hawaiian knowledge alive requires keeping Hawaiian language alive. Silva takes up this legacy in her piece as she asks, 'Who worked to perpetuate our native language in the hostile or at best difficult conditions of the 20th century? What efforts did they make?' Silva's Hawaiian resurgence work is a powerful rebuttal of the colonial fantasy of epistemicide as the death of Native epistemologies. She attends to the wisdom of her ancestors' knowledge practices and ways of life, and in doing so, strengthens the genealogical links among the generations of Kanaka Maoli intellectuals that Christian colonizers attempted to sever. Using her knowledge of Hawaiian language, Silva conserves the contributions of those who 'worked tirelessly to keep the kahua (foundation) of indigenous intellectualism and knowledge in place so that future generations could build on it' (2017, p. 212).

As the articles in this exchange make salient, contemporary political theory in the western academic world is dominated by the mundane conceptual landscapes of colonial white supremacy. These landscapes uphold conceptual traditions that reliably produce epistemic oppression under the guise of objectivity, neutrality, and the faithful application of disciplinary knowledge. Alternatives to this framework have existed for much longer than colonialism has, and they provide a pathway to escape from the total domination of our imaginations that colonialism attempts to maintain. These alternatives are here, have always been here, and have

been changing, updating, and transforming to adapt to and accommodate the demands of these times.

The question of efforts made under extraordinary circumstances is an important one. Contemporary political theory often relies on western timescales, histories, and reference points to narrate the political events of these times as 'extra' ordinary, even in 'comparative' approaches to global politics. Even 'critical' political reflection in the west is done through languages meant to destroy the ability of many of the world's peoples to govern autonomously. If there is one central blank spot that this exchange reveals, it is that investigating contemporary political crises without consideration of epistemic oppression is an evasion of the reality inhabited by the many peoples who have had to continually remake the world from colonial ashes for generations. They continue to do so in these tumultuous times, when it is so commonly said that 'the unthinkable has happened'—without acknowledgement of the neocolonial structures that make 'the unthinkable' a basic condition of existence for Black, Brown, and Indigenous peoples. This is something that diverse and resistant thinkers have been naming, theorizing, and fighting against *in order to move beyond it* – so that a livable world may be possible for their communities, their people, and their generations to come.

Bad Magic

Kristie Dotson

Epistemology may be one of the last forms of magic that colonial cultures allow themselves. They don't call it magic, of course. That would disturb some of the tales they tell. For example, acknowledging the magic of epistemology would make words like 'primitive' lose their meaning. If the adjective 'primitive' is determined in part by a penchant to allow myth and mysticism to organize one's world and worldview, then taking epistemology as a form of magic means that human collectives writ large are, bluntly speaking, 'primitive.' Epistemologies are reservoirs of myth, mysticism and ritual that perform their own forms of magic. They conjure. Colonial epistemologies deny the conjure capacities of their own commitments, practices, and rituals, which makes them routinely unreflexive about the effects they produce and the worlds

they maintain. This would only be an annoying absence of awareness, if such failed reflexivity didn't turn out to be so very destructive.

My claim is simple. *Epistemological systems that fail to promote epistemic reflexivity, e.g. an awareness that one's epistemology has significant limits, generate bad magic.*[1] Bad magic, here, is another word for epistemic oppression. It is a term my grandmother would be familiar with, even if the definition I am about to offer would leave her blinking and annoyed. Still, by *bad magic,* I mean the cultivation, maintenance and protection of everyday practices that have a modal profile that includes regularly generating reckless and relentless harm. Epistemology can promote bad magic because of its frequent mainline effect on governance schemes. This is my position, and it has been my position for a long while, though it has often gone unrecognized as such. Here I offer a sketch of my position on epistemic oppression recast in different terms, i.e. bad magic.

As an opener, I suppose this is as good an attention grabber as others I might pen. I won't defend most of my claims about colonial epistemologies. Though I could defend them and probably will elsewhere. Rather, I gesture to epistemologies' magics and outline a kind of epistemic reflexivity one needs to have to detect those magics and, perhaps more importantly, their limits. I conclude by highlighting that, in the absence of instilled practices of epistemic reflexivity built into one's epistemological system, bad magic becomes the norm and not the exception.

Epistemologies, and their varying clusters of assumptions, commitments, and aspirations, serve a range of functions for the communities that engage in them. One of their functions is conjuring, or, to use a word more familiar to western academy folks, governance.[2] We can take Kyle Whyte's understanding of governance and knowledge systems here, as I hold a similar position. Epistemologies are 'irreplaceable sources' of guidance, future planning, and

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[1] I oscillate in this short piece between 'epistemology,' 'epistemologies,' 'epistemological systems,' and 'epistemological orientations.' In analytic epistemology, there is often a refusal to accept anything like 'epistemologies' due to a monochronic understanding of epistemology as the one they have and anything else as something else. I, however, take as the point of departure that there are many epistemologies. That is to say, there are many epistemological systems that have their own clusters of commitments, core myths, and operating rituals that aim at storying worlds for particular functions.

[2] It is important to note that governance is actually a mechanism of conjure magic, on my account. Governance aids in ordering steps, which is a way that conjure magics can be performed. But it is not the only way.

collectivization (2018, p. 62). They generate (and are generated by) assumptions, commitments, and goals that orient collectives toward persistence and collective action by aiding in generating 'common sense' and, yes, normativity. I might be tempted to maintain that any 'culture' or significant 'collective' has epistemological orientations that offer the glue for its networks to function towards goals and certain kinds of relations that bind its constituents. But that may be too brash a statement. Instead, I will offer that epistemologies are a manifestation of magic that help collectives toward many expressions and manifestations of collectivity. *Magic*, in this instance, refers to the deliberate organization of events for the sake of selected outcomes. Epistemologies often outline steps for the sake of an expected (and acceptable) range of results. In addition, they are often used to assess steps taken for the ends they achieve. The temporal dimensions of epistemological systems, epistemological orientations and epistemological conduct are neither set nor static. Epistemologies are dynamic. They have always been, and will remain, a form of magic.

Epistemology is often a magic that centers on collective demands and not necessarily on individual exploits. They are magical insofar as they aid in shaping our landscapes, relationships, and projected futures. Epistemologies go a long way toward making things 'just so,' and after making them 'just so,' proclaiming said state of affairs as the way it has always been. Epistemologies defy time, as much as they keep it. Epistemologies bring worlds into existence and then re-tell the persistence of those worlds as 'matters of fact.' Epistemology conjures. And one of the major ways it does this is through the manufacture of governance, e.g. the ordering of steps.

A good portion of readers will nod at this, certain that epistemology, as a form of conjuring, is about as magical as any set of ritual practices with steadfast commitments can be. Such readers will have already been exposed to epistemology's capacity to conjure. But another sizable portion will think that putting epistemology and conjure magic side-by-side is nonsense. For them, epistemology dis-covers knowledge and does not manufacture it. No matter how many times the 'dis-cover' idea has been challenged in the past, this legalistic, juridical understanding of epistemology remains strong in western settler colonial and neo-colonial landscapes. Its strength, on my account, does not only follow from its advocates and acolytes,

but from its governance capacity within systems of relations and aspirations. It should surprise no one that many of the people who have never considered epistemology's magic will also be among those who imagine that 'primitive cultures' exist. And, yes, there is a connection between constructing hierarchies of cultures and maintaining an inability to be epistemically reflexive about one's own forms of conjure magic.

How, pray tell, can someone detect the governance value, as Kyle Whyte might call it, of unfamiliar epistemologies when they don't even realize the governance value of their own epistemology? They just think – and honestly this is starting to get ludicrous in the 21st century – that their orientation toward understanding their worlds is 'the way, the truth, and the light.' How can someone with this kind of conceit and hubris ever imagine the governance value of another epistemological system? They can barely detect that their own epistemological systems conjured worlds into being and then claimed those worlds and arrangements as how things have always been. To them that is just 'the way things are' at best, and, at worst, it is 'the way they ought to be.'

In non-reflexive epistemological systems, it is often this normative assessment that is the most troubling. As I argued in 'Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression,' there is something wrong with an epistemological system that fails to create avenues for detecting its own limits and then normalizes those limits for any mode of world-making. How can someone who has not yet realized that their epistemological system performs conjure magic ever realize that other systems do that as well? How do they do anything but judge other epistemological orientations deficient according to its own swamping sense of normativity? How can someone who fails to realize that epistemologies *do* conjure, *especially their own*, have anything but judgment for the epistemologies that *for their well-functioning* do not hide the conjure-function of epistemology? It's nigh impossible to move someone this mired in their own inherited epistemological system.

What am I expressing? I am saying that an epistemology that does not build into its functioning an acknowledgement of the governance-value of epistemologies themselves, is, at best, incomplete and, at worse, an epistemology that continually invokes hierarchies for the sake of its own function*. It has to protect itself against the detection of one of its primary*

functions, i.e. conjure towards governance. To call this failure of reflexivity 'dishonest' is to fail to understand the scope of this ill-function. Rather, in my estimation, epistemologies that assure a failure to detect their own conjure magic also hold the problem of failing to appreciate their limits. And there are significant limits with material impacts to every epistemological system. A failure to be epistemically reflexive, e.g. the capacity to detect the conjure-capacity of one's epistemological orientations, also assures a failure to detect when one's epistemological conduct is failing miserably, often because it may be failing on standards and goals not held by the system in question. And those failures will be regular outputs of the system. This is just a brute description. But I have argued for it in varying details in different papers. See, for example, 'Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression' (Dotson 2014) and 'Accumulating Epistemic Power' (Dotson 2018). Most, if not all, epistemological orientations in the western academy are epistemically unreflexive. Degrees are awarded in it. One might think higher education in western academies (and their neo-colonial echoes) amounts to how to double down on being the 'way, the truth, and the light.' Surely it seems that way to this visitor who haunts its halls.

Colonial epistemologies appear to be unreflexive as a rule and not as an exception. They render all other, quite frankly reflexive epistemologies, deficient. They often deem themselves as the 'one true' epistemology. They also imagine themselves to be saviors for those caught in so-called 'deficient' epistemologies by bringing them into their own. To the practiced interlocutor, it is already apparent how this is a governance scheme. It may be a catalyst for 1) a hierarchical ordering (where those epistemologies most consistent with the unreflexive epistemology are positioned as best, and those inconsistent as worst) and 2) a call for radical consumption. This should be familiar. I have often heard this referred to as 'education' in colonial landscapes. Yet, it is also a governance scheme for a colonial epistemology. As a governance scheme, it is also a way of being in 'public.' A way of understanding the world. A way of being with others. A way of understanding one's purpose among others. The epistemologies that fail to include epistemic reflexivity typify a governance-coloniality. *Governance-coloniality,* in my estimation, refers to the manufacture and maintenance of 'common sense' (or everyday epistemic orientations) for the function of hierarchy and radical

consumption.[3] Like any governance scheme built in an epistemology, it operates towards collective goals and normative acts. It outlines outcomes and orders steps. Governance-coloniality, in my estimation, is why unreflexive epistemologies so often generate bad magic.

For some, I imagine this link between epistemology and governance-coloniality looks like yet another unwarranted leap of narrative logic. For others, there is a nod and a moving on. For they have always known this or something very similar. This is a quandary for a musing like this one. Once one detects the governance-schemes, at minimum, or the conjure capacity, at most, of epistemologies – both of which require a kind of epistemic reflexivity – it becomes difficult to imagine hierarchies *generated from within the insularity of particular epistemological governance schemes*.[4] This is not to say hierarchies are impossible. I am, after all, demonstrating one here. I do not appreciate, nor can I see the long-term value in an epistemology shot through with governance-coloniality, which typically entails epistemic unreflexivity. If you're going to do terrible things to other people's worlds to bring them into yours, you need to know you are destroying something precious and not primitive – or, at least, no more primitive than your own myths and rituals. If you are going to be a villain, you need to know you are being a villain. What colonial epistemologies often do is hide the grounds for assessing their own collective actions as villainy – by hiding their practices of conjure and corresponding governance-schemes as 'just the way everyone ought to think and be.'

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[3] Notice that consumption is different than assimilation. Assimilation might be done on terms where, once acclimated to the 'new' worlds, one might become 'one-with' the, so-called, originary group. There are civic relations in assimilation that have costs and, yes, benefits. Consumption is no guarantee of acceptance and civic relation. In a colonial system, different peoples are often consumed as units for the system in lesser and greater rankings as 'not-originary-stock.' Their steps are ordered. They can be prescribed to play particular roles for theatres of life and death. That is, they may have a place. But they may never actually become 'one-of-the-parent-stock' colonials. They are consumed, not necessarily assimilated. For more on this, see bell hooks' 'Eating the Other' (hooks 1992).

[4] This is not a story of cultural relativism for everyday truths. Nor is it a piece that imagines symmetries in knowledge-outputs equates to symmetry of epistemological orientations. Epistemology, as it will be understood here, is more than just whether one churns out propositions that are reliable, reasonable, or even justifiably true. I imagine that some form of relativism will be offered here at the level of epistemological systems. But this is not, nor does it translate to, a relativity about 'truth.' In an inquiry like this one, truth itself is in doubt *in terms of its adjudicating value*. But whether there are 'truths' isn't much in dispute. It may be that beings like humans need air and water to live, for example. But it isn't the case that they necessarily need the concept of 'race' or that there is anything 'natural' about the production of the idea. It may be that within a particular epistemological system it was inevitable, i.e. part of its modal profile one might say. But it isn't that it was inevitable for any similarly structured being within an entirely different epistemological context.

Colonial epistemologies and their governance schemes are a plague on this world. But, and I have attempted to highlight this in 'Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression' and 'Accumulating Epistemic Power,' without epistemic reflexivity one's capacity to detect that they are operating in a problematic fashion is severely compromised. There are limits to every epistemological system. Period. When this has not occurred to one's interlocutor, for example, it becomes singularly difficult to point out that those limits even exist. *One way* to do this is to try to tease out parts of an epistemology's governance scheme to realize *that it is not universally normative.* Try telling someone for whom it has never occurred to them that the way they add up the world isn't really 'the only way' and 'the only truth' and so on. Try. I dare you. Their resistance is not necessarily incomprehensible. After all, whatever they've adopted for understanding the world, it – to some significant degree – 'works for them.' Secular religions are funny that way.

So we have a bit of a catch-22. If one has detected epistemology's governance scheme, which is still not to fully appreciate its conjure magics, then one is most likely also minimally epistemically reflexive. But if one has never detected epistemology's impact on governance, then it is doubtful that one is even *minimally* epistemically reflexive. This kind of 'framing,' literally and figuratively, of the audience for a narrative like this one is generally frowned upon in western academic writing. This is because I essentially said: 'either you detect epistemology's magics or you don't; and if you don't, I doubt you will detect it from a couple of sentences in this text. You're almost hopeless.' Of course, if one reads, 'Conceptualizing Epistemic Oppression,' closely, I have lobbed this message before. And I have encountered nothing since that time to change it – and far more 'evidence' that I might have been onto something.

And though I am not optimistic that some words on a page will help folks who have been raised to be epistemically unreflexive, (e.g. to practice governance-coloniality as a way of living), to detect the magic of epistemologies, I will still try to illustrate one way epistemologies are magical by offering an example of the mystical edges that hold them together and their functions. By *mystical edges*, I mean the parts of an epistemology that require commitment for their functioning and *after* commitment justify themselves as statements of fact and/or necessary conditions. To an 'outsider,' they present themselves as mystical musings, to an

'insider' they appear as common sense. There are no epistemologies that do not have mystical edges that look like 'common sense' (to the 'believer'). To say that epistemologies have mystical edges is not also to say that they are unreliable, given to fanaticism (even where one would describe them as fanatical), or utterly incapable of being successful enterprises on their own terms. Rather, it means that part of what makes epistemologies magical is the mysticism they engage in and the ways those mysticisms generate material consequences. Epistemologies have conjure capacity precisely because they play a significant role in the production of common sense that produces collective effort/labor *in the everyday*.

One shouldn't read too deeply into the mystical edges of an epistemology something like the notion of 'malfunction.'[5] If it is an epistemology, then it regularly produces the results it promises and the believers are trained to understand its results as what anyone should expect from an epistemology or, maybe more specifically, from their worlds as such. This usually translates to, 'my system works fine for the values and expectations I have for the system and for the world.' To this degree, an epistemology, if it is an 'epistemology,' always works. And if it works, it should turn up some of the same observations that any other epistemological system would. But it will deviate, sometimes to significant degrees, on what kinds of reference codes and exegeses it promotes and aids in maintaining, and also in terms of the focus and emphasis of its outputs. *Reference codes* refers to understandings and/or units of management generated within an epistemological system. What an epistemological system takes as relevant and salient changes according to the reference codes of the system.

Let's take the role of truth in epistemological orientations most often taught in K-12 education in the US. Usually, because I don't want to say all the time, truth is taught as the most valuable non-epistemic good. The pursuit of 'the' truth is supposed to be everything. We are often told, in more ways than we can count, that rationality is reasoning towards truth

[5] Some might recall that I've labeled unreflexive epistemologies, 'ill-functioning'' epistemologies. So, to indicate that they do not necessarily malfunction may seem like a conundrum. It isn't. To express that an epistemology functions for ill or that it fails on its own terms is to indicate two different kinds of assessments. An epistemology that functions for ill does so in a context where other epistemological orientations exist. This is an external critique. The way the epistemology interacts (or prompts interactions) with different epistemologies is at issue. To indicate that an epistemology is malfunctioning is to say it fails with respect to its own goals. This latter assessment is an internal critique.

along with a host of other mythologies that promote truth as having an adjudicating role that, in my opinion, it rarely serves. I have often wondered why truth has been so key to the epistemological orientations I learned in western education and academic settings. I ask this, not because truth doesn't exist. It surely does. But because there is so much truth, it is hard to see how it could play an adjudicating role within or among epistemological systems. There are so many things about which something like 'truth' would be the appropriate description that, far from 'settling' any matter, truth seems to be less powerful than people imagine. Mythologies about truth as some kind of purifying agent for suspicious belief, investigation, and action undoubtedly contribute to this post-truth era. Some folks figured out, though many always knew, truth simply doesn't play the adjudicating role many assume. And, as such, is a site of manipulation towards collectivity or, more politely stated, a mechanism of governance.[6]

Of course, truth has been under fire for a while. But it has always been vulnerable to manipulation. The adjudicating power of truth *is* often manufactured. Note, I didn't say truth is manufactured (though in a longer paper, I would have no qualms arguing that for certain things people want to call 'true'), though I need not reach that far for the point I am making. Rather, *the adjudicating power* of truth in any given discussion is manufactured. What truth matters? Which parts are salient and why? This is not given by the brute existence of truth. This is often given by governance. And, from governance, the ordered steps and ranges of expected outcomes of one's everyday conduct, i.e. magic.

Tackling a difficult issue around the ways state custodial actors justify their violence and murder of Black people in the US, in 'Accumulating Epistemic Power,' I highlight what truth *doesn't give us.* Not because it doesn't exist, but because it does not help to solve conundrums around relevance, salience, and significance that are never far from any claim we believe is exerting pressure on narratives about 'the way things are.' And as the rebellions rage in a post-COVID-19 US to end state-sanctioned violence against Black peoples, we can watch different truths begin to prevail while also detecting an encroaching entrenchment in epistemological systems that governed (and still govern) towards violence writ large. And it is the violence,

[6] To say that manipulation is a mechanism of governance is not to say that all mechanisms of governance are manipulation. However, manipulation is available, no matter how toxic, for generating expressions of collectivity.

which to the unreflexive just looks like the 'everyday' or the normative products of a well-functioning 'common sense,' that has so deeply disturbed me in my life and has preoccupied my work.

There is something categorically colonial about an epistemology that has yet to figure out that truth rarely trumps relevance in a dispute – and that relevance is rarely generated by brute truths. To call it unreflexive is, to be honest, kind. There are more harrowing adjectives one can use. To be clear, individuals raised within colonial epistemologies can figure this out – look at Nietzsche or Foucault – without the *epistemological system itself* ever incorporating this understanding as part of its governance schemes. Whatever epistemic reflexivity is, that thing that allows for the routine awareness that epistemological systems have limits and that those limits are not just about what we think, but are also about what we attempt to govern (ourselves and others) towards, it is not a virtue of actors. Actors can break away from the system and the system will carry on. Rather, for epistemological orientations to routinely produce epistemically reflexive actors and awareness, it must be a feature of operative systems. And for epistemological orientations to systematically produce epistemically *un*-reflexive actors is to predictably generate reckless and relentless harms that will be treated as both normative and inevitable. The baseline for 'progress' under a colonial epistemology will be (and has been) a haunting consumption (often unto death) of Black and Brown and Indigenous peoples as normal and inevitable. Such violence, because that is indeed what we are talking about, what generates, authorizes, and licenses near infinite registers of violence, are the material effects of governance-coloniality.[7] They are not one-off individualized phenomena; they are systematically conjured forms of bad magic.

The Danger of Thinking and Dreaming

Julieta Paredes Carvajal

[7] For an extended example of what I can only gesture to here, see Jennifer Nez Denetdale's 'Return to 'The Uprising at Beautiful Mountain in 1913.' Denetdale's account tracks operative epistemological orientations, governance-coloniality and violence, i.e. bad magic, in a particular historical event in US settler colonial history.

What is knowing and what defines whether something is classified as knowledge? We start from this question in order to talk about our Native communities and the systematic denial of the knowledges constructed and produced from our people's ways of conceiving life, which is in community, between humanity and mother and sister nature, with our spirituality as the energetic presence that gives us strength. I write in the plural because my thinking is an organic part of Abya Yala's[8] Communitarian Feminism — an organization and social movement that, with my contributions and those of my sisters, has made an important epistemic break: decolonizing feminism. This is a proposal that calls for dialogue to repair and heal the world. But, contrary to what is hoped for, once again as Native women we continue to be subjected to violence, persecution, and defamation, just as our maternal ancestors were. The 'good' Native woman will be the subdued and colonized Native woman.

From our situated reflection in Abya Yala today, we understand that the definition of knowledge is formulated by acknowledging and positioning oneself before the prevailing power relations in the continent's territories and the planet. We affirm, then, that knowledge is fundamentally a political act, a positioning in the face of the historic powers set up in the territories, erecting a system of planetary dominance that for us – Communitarian Feminists – we term the current dominating system of Patriarchy, which is:

> the system of all oppressions, all exploitations, all the violence and discrimination that exists over all humanity (women, men, and nonbinary peoples) and nature. It is a system that is historically constructed, built on the bodies (...) of women (Paredes J, 2014, p. 76).

The construction of knowledge has been a space for power struggles: knowledge has been controlled and manipulated by elites and has served to create a social imaginary of what knowledge is. The body of knowledge: male. The color of knowledge: white. The territories of knowledge: western europe. The place of knowledge: the academy. Everything and everyone that is outside of these whimsied parameters has historically fought to be recognized *as* knowledge and as knowing subjects.

[8] Abya Yala means 'land in its full maturity' in the Kuna language; it is the name that we give to native communities (pueblos originarios) in our continent, ill-named 'America'

Politically, there are many disputed paths regarding the production of knowledge. For Communitarian Feminists, we contend that our knowledge process is always a collective enterprise – the community's needs, insights, and struggles propel our creativity, our curiosity, and the desire to serve. The process begins with the moment of organization, asking Pachamama-Ñanderu and our ancestors to guide our path. Then comes writing, creating, recreating so that we may afterwards communicate the insights we gathered collectively. These stages can involve personal responsibility and initiative, but, the moment the knowledge is going to be communicated and put into practice and action, it becomes communal again, with the permission of Pachamama-Ñanderu and our ancestors. Therefore, the construction of knowledge involves circular processes rooted in a given territory and in finite bodies (Women, Men, nonbinary people) taking into account the historical moments in which we live.

Our ancestors fought and resisted colonization. They defended themselves as they sought, developed, and proposed alternatives, coming up with ways of living together without killing one another. But the racist colonizers were – and are – skilled at using deception, betrayal, and manipulation; the heinous attack on our bodies and our lands had arrived. We, the original peoples, survived a systematic extermination, carried out with bullets, with torture, with targeted infections to our bodies, with modes of entrapment and coerced suicides. Moema Viezzer and Marcelo Grondin (2018) give an account of all this in their book: they speak of at least 70 million of Abya Yala's Native inhabitants murdered. It is the greatest genocide of humanity!

Understanding the need to survive, resist, and live on – advancing a world where we are respected in the completeness of our being, in the fullness of our lives (not as ornaments to the dominant euro-western forms of life) – is the path forward, the mandate that we receive from our ancestors. Along that path we come up against power relations that condition the construction of knowledge to the needs of the dominant groups, which today impose a reductive account of 'reason' in their stronghold over the concept of human intelligence. Racist-bourgeois rationalism and pragmatism still dominate. The oppressive knowledge used to legitimate their processes, methods, instruments and verifications purport to convince us that there exists a political neutrality and objectivity that is synonymous with truth and reality.

Bolivia (Qullasuyo Marka) has produced an important political moment (2006-2019) for the construction of knowledge, a moment led by a process of reclamation and creation of our epistemologies, or Native ways of knowing. The knowledge that emerged from this period also served to design public policies. It was well-aimed – the attempt to make decolonization and depatriarcalization the fundamental bases of the government's public policies on social change. This marked an unprecedented and important achievement in the history of over 500 years of resistance struggles.

We think it is necessary to bring awareness to the context, the space, the time, the conditions of daily and political life in which Communitarian Feminism arises as a women's social organization and as an ethical and aesthetic political movement with proposals for decolonization and depatriarchalization, from our memory and the ancestral paths set forth by Abya Yala's Native communities. We are part of the many contributions Bolivia has made to the process of change, a process violently interrupted by a coup d'état and the establishment of a cynically racist authoritarian regime, which, as a characteristic feature, uses the Bible to justify its actions.

The Memory of Our Peoples

The creation of nation-states was useful to powerful elites, as were education and universities. But democracy, the media, religions, and cultural policies have also served their functions. For Native men and women, the colonial invasion of our bodies and lands meant the extermination of a great part of our cultures, the predation of mother earth and the appropriation of the spaces of daily life. School, media, religions and Churches serve permanently to remind us what is considered politically 'correct', what is 'normal', what is 'intelligent'. Drilled into our heads and hearts is the alleged 'impossibility' of living without accumulation or private property, the uselessness of dreaming with a communitarian ethos of *Vivir Bien* (Suma Qhamaña). Meanwhile, our lives as Indigenous women and men continue to persist otherwise, insisting that this way of life (Suma Qhamaña) is what our villages, communities, clans and Indigenous social organizations – with all their stumbles – fight to defend. We do not wish to fall prey to romanticism and mythology about the concept of 'the

indigenous,' yet we believe that inherent in our struggles there lays, here and now, a vision for the future of humanity.

The Neocolonial Feminist

Eurocentric and eurocentered academic feminists try to decode what Communitarian Feminism is: some do not even understand it yet they write about us without our consent, surveilling us without consent, and then citing us. They allow themselves to colonially 'define' what is and who are Communitarian Feminists (Gargallo 2012). Gargallo, moreover, in a typical abuse of power, speaks of communitarian feminisms by diluting our existence and the memory of our collective processes. Communitarian Feminism is processive and is itself rooted in the emplaced historical process that produced it. Such abuses of power, through their many assumptions, work to dilute this context, profiting from the opportunism of some women so as to avoid situating the importance of the path forged by the feminism of dignity and autonomy of the 1990s in Bolivia. Paradoxically, the work was distinguished with an honorable mention in Venenzuela's *Premio Libertador al Pensamiento Crítico* in 2013.

Then, appearing alongside 'S,' there are the decolonial feminists who spend their lives studying decoloniality as an object to dissect. They were also distressed, given that they assert that in Abya Yala gender relations did not exist. Instead, we speak of an 'entronque patriarcal' – that is to say, we assert the existence of an ancestral patriarchy. Communitarian Feminism does not belong to the field of decoloniality: we decolonize as a political act and we cite our collective practices that then transform into theoretical approaches. It's interesting to see how today, without minimal critical reflection, they amplify 'S' and they call themselves decolonial. (Espinoza Miñoso 2014).

Feminists also use persecution and political harassment against our organization and social movement of Communitarian Feminism, employing old weapons of fascism and Nazism, such as slander and defamation, to try and manufacture a single truth out of many lies on social media. The intention is to create doubt and discredit our contributions, as no one will want to read or listen to a criminal. Today in these networks, 'fake news' functions as a virtual stand-in for stonings and bonfires, and to establish a new kind of inquisition, which, paradoxically, is

carried out today by feminists who are against the Communitarian Feminism of Abya Yala. They steal our concepts and want our corpses to redistribute the conceptual wealth amongst each other, to sow the fields we planted with ideas, theoretical approaches, knowledges and dreams. The scale of the attacks affirms the revolutionary character of our existence – we are not functional to the system. All our theoretical, political and ethical discussions take place on our respective lands and in community, not in a virtual field where envy and competitiveness hide behind a racist-colonial fascism. But let us instead continue to talk about our contributions, so that they may come to understand why, given the reactions they provoked from us, our contributions were still made without malice or the intent to disrespect anyone, but in the steadfastness of resistance and the call to heal the world.

Decolonizing Time and Space

In the task of affirming our Native ways of our knowing, we need to take up the concept of 'decolonizing time' (Paredes J. 2016, p. 47), which foremost contends that, from the colonial perspective, eurocentric thought declares that any idea, organization, or human activity in Abya Yala – also called America (North America, Central America, South America) – is backward or underdeveloped. Any idea, organization, or activity produced in Abya Yala, they believe, was already thought of by Europe. This forms the explanatory basis for claiming that any action or invention in Abya Yala is immediately explainable as part of Europe's own history. Or in the worst cases, the ideas, discoveries, and contributions that are the heritage of our peoples are plagiarized, made invisible, and patented by usurpers. Such is the case of quinoa, a preferred food globally, which US agronomists Duane Johnson and Sara Ward abusively patented for the Hoechst company, with patent number 5,304,718. The patent was processed using false information, such as the claim that in 1989 quinoa seed was 'found' in the wild in the State of Colorado. (Movimientos.org, s, f.).

It is western Europe's anguish to have never come to terms with what happened to them when Columbus, by pure chance, reaches these lands and encounters another world on the same planet, another world coexisting and living in parallel time. They never understood, the Europeans, that they are not the only ones in the world. Within this colonialist and

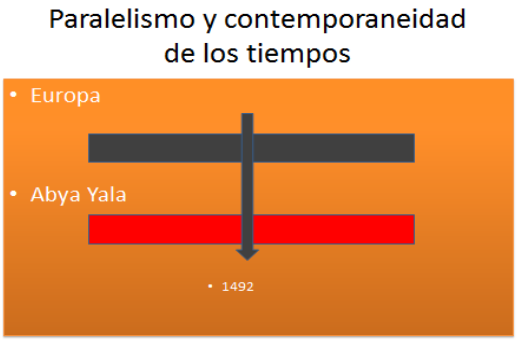
colonizing thought is the assumption that different societies are all modeled after Europe. It assumes, for example, that all patriarchates, such as the one we bear, which happened on our lands, would be a branch of European patriarchy – an underdeveloped and backward patriarchy compared with that of Europe. Against this, we assert the need to decolonize time and we put forth the idea of a decolonized contemporaneity. When we want to link Abya Yala (America) and Europe, we understand them as parallel timescales, as synchronous existences parallel to each other. (J. Walls 2020)

We can better explain this notion: Abya Yala and Europe were mutually unaware of each other's existence. But despite this reality, equally and in every way, both existed at the same time on the planet. So even if one was ignorant of the existence of the other and vice versa, Abya Yala and Europe both existed. They existed in a coeval mutual ignorance, one that, to understand what the notions time, the world, and planet earth are, we need to decolonize – a starting point is our conceptions of knowledge, perceptions, feelings and desires. We can locate these goals in the decolonizing approach to the *concept of contemporaneity*, which runs far from what today passes as an understanding of 'contemporanousness' via Europe's conceptual arrogance, which understands it through hegemonic and dominant euro-western constructions of time and space.

At the same time that we situate the violent act of colonization, we must also analyze that these impositions were 'accepted' by the opportunism and complicity of Indigenous women and men. We have to assume the responsibilities that we have in the construction of our world so as to illustrate and account for ways to liberate ourselves.

The decolonization of the notion of time is necessary to understand that our time and our lives were not built on the European model. Community Feminists are neither European disciples, nor can our lives be subsumed by the linear understanding of European time. Our origin is not in the French revolution, but in far older struggles. Even less will we allow our history to be situated as part of Europe's past, under concepts such as *primitive*, *wild*, *backward*, to define our peoples. And so, Europe self-defines as 'the contemporary,' that is, as the vanguard of time on planet earth, situated in a present hegemonically dominated by Euro-westerners.

'Figure 1: Parallelism and contemporaneous time' 'Figure 2: Europe tried to eat our time'



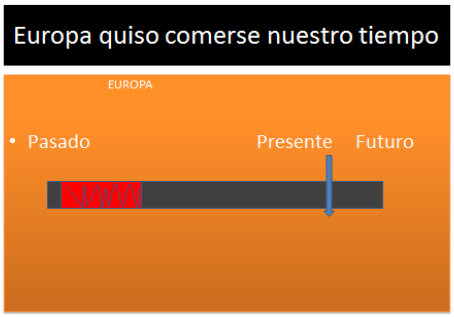


Fig. 1: Paredes J.

Fig. 2: Paredes J.

Our Own Paths of Liberation

We have already established that our temporalities are not the same, that one is the time of Europe and the other is the time of our Native territories and our peoples, and that we coexist in parallel. In our lands, there have been distinct ways of life, of social organization and, of course, struggles. Although it may be difficult to acknowledge, there was also an ancestral patriarchy with its own characteristics.

When speaking of ancestral patriarchy, euro-western feminists, the daughters of colonial thinking, take pleasure in saying that they already knew that, because what they termed 'patriarchy' they consider universal. They presume that all patriarchates mirror the European model of patriarchy. What they are actually saying is that they believe that, by naming the patriarchy in Europe, they would have already discovered all the forms of oppression towards women on the planet, and consequently, also the forms of their liberation.

The masters (*patrones*) of life in Qullasuyo – today called Bolivia – do not split from Europe, and we are not talking about backward societies either. In order to begin to understand the *entronque patriarcal* we must clarify that these patriarchates – the ancestral one of the Tawantinsuyo and the colonial one of Europe – had nothing to do with each other until 1492. From then on, they will complement, articulate, and interlace with one another for the greater misfortune of the women of our territories in Abya Yala. While we are not going to deepen in this article the valuable contribution of the concept *entronque patriarcal* – that marks the

epistemic break with the theoretical construction of feminisms – the treatment of this topic is available in my book, *para descolonizar el feminismo* (2020).

Feminisms and Communitarian Feminism

As women in indigenous communities and indigenous organizations, we face discrimination, violence, and preconceptions from whites and those who self-proclaim to be white. But this is not the only violence that we face. It is even more important and fundamental to us to analyze the internal relationships living in our social organizations. These attitudes are not only of those who do not recognize themselves as Indigenous, but also of our own Indigenous brothers and territorial authorities. And it is not only men who engage in the practice of devaluing and disqualifying women – other women also participate.

This devaluation of women and their existence is daily and historical. Explicit and implicit disqualification of women's political contributions and actions is a practice. This macho practice is amplified when women are also leaders and authorities in different areas of knowledge.

Feminism in general has come a long way, as a body of thought that denounces the oppressions women face. However, this feminism was born from the triumph of the French revolution, and it is the approach bourgeois women use to win civic rights that put them on equal footing with bourgeois men. That is their origin; some feminisms can question the classist character of other feminisms, but all these western feminisms are eurocentric and eurocentered.

It is important to make visible the epistemic strategy of Communitarian Feminism that does not dispute terms as sounds, but does dispute the meaning of concepts such as sound. Feminism for Community Feminism is: 'The fight of any woman in any part of the world at any time in history, is against a patriarchy that oppresses her or tries to oppress her.' Paredes J. 2014, p. 65.

This definition locates struggles as land-based and embodied, far from dominant, centralized euro-westernism, but at the same time that it presents a political place for dialogue between feminisms that recognize themselves in these shared sounds – feminisms that want to question the Eurocentric and classist colonial character of bourgeois feminism. So that a dialogue may

begin. The second part of the concept of feminism that we have proposed, then, defines feminism as a position before patriarchy. Nowadays feminisms are a great word salad, they use as synonyms words like patriarchy, machismo, gender relations. This is a very serious conceptual error!

For Communitarian Feminism, patriarchy 'is the system of all oppressions, all exploitations, all violence and discrimination that lives, all humanity (women, men and nonbinary people) and nature, historically built, on the bodies of women'. (Paredes J. 2014, p. 77).

The notions advanced by Communitarian Feminism's concept of patriarchy are useful since it makes it possible to understand the aspects of the power relations that make up the history of our Native communities. We want to emphasize that Communitarian Feminism's definition of patriarchy allows us to locate other oppressions and not only the oppression that men exert towards women.

- Patriarchy is the system that incorporates other systems such as capitalism, colonialism, and neoliberalism.
- Patriarchy also exploits and dominates nature.
- Patriarchy not only accounts for the subordination and domination of women but also that of men and nonbinary persons, but it is historically constructed through women's bodies.
- In patriarchy there are also other relations of domination and oppression such as Woman-woman, Man-man, Man-woman and Woman-man.
- Patriarchy is a system of domination; machismo are behaviors and ways of thinking that consider women to be inferior to men.
- The Patriarchy has created instruments and institutions that serve to control and reinforce its domain over time.

Machismo

Machismo, unlike Patriarchy, are behaviors and ways of thinking. Machistas are men and machistas are also women, but men benefit from the machismo of women. Machismo, understood as a collection of behaviors and ways of thinking, can be changed individually or in small groups. But to change the patriarchal system, we have to do it as peoples, as organizations, and as social movements. These differentiated articulations of Patriarchy and machismo allow us have political clarity, help us fight against machismo in our communities, clans and villages, and

allow us to have confidence and unity between women and men in the struggles against the patriarchal system of domination – struggles that we want to engage in as women without having to suffer femicide, violence, and discrimination by our male brothers.

Genero

Another important category in the feminist analysis of the Patriarchate is the concept of gender. Gender, in Communitarian Feminism, can be conceived as the correctional facilities that are built to cage sexed bodies. The feminine gender is for women and for men, the masculine gender. But although the masculine gender is a prison for men, it is a prison that is worth more than the female prison of gender that corresponds to women.

> It is essential to differentiate gender from body. Today, both in academic practice and in political practice, there is a great confusion between body and gender as categories. Therein lies one of the conceptual confusions of feminism in general as well as of feminism in our territories. I want to assert that it is upon the material basis of the body that gender is built. If this is true, then we have to affirm that gender is in no way a substitute for the body; women are women and not feminine gender. (Paredes, 2020,1)

Never before has deep reflection on planet earth, Mother and sister Nature, on humanity and the world created by humanity, been more essential. It is an opportunity to understand that as the patriarchal system of dominance and power relations target our lives, they attack us all. The paths of our liberation have to be woven as a communal fabric, far from envy, competitiveness, and opportunism. That is what we, as Communitarian Feminists, propose. However, we cannot build such a world without recognizing the inherited power relations with which we must contend and the relations in which we are complicit. Epistemic violence is part of the racist colonial arrogance and the arrogance of the bourgeois class, which build and maintain the new class of ignorants in the 21st century.

Personally, as a member of the organic fabric of Abya Yala's Communitarian Feminism, I write to communicate and document, because our knowledge-rich orality was made invisible and devoured by the Euro-western graphic domain. I write in the graphics and languages of the

colonizer, so that other 'Gargallos' do not come here to grope our people's bodies, struggles, and knowledge. To leave a written testament of our Native ways of knowing, our struggles, and our joys as women of Abya Yala's Original Peoples.

¡Que sea en Buena hora Jallala Pachamama!

Nā Hulu Kupuna ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi o Ke Kaua Honua II/
Our World War II Elders Committed to Our Native Language
Noenoe K. Silva

The twentieth century saw the decline and near disappearance of the Hawaiian language. Many of the steps in this process have been analyzed, especially the ban on teaching in the language that was enshrined in the Organic Act of 1900, which followed the illegitimate annexation of 1898 (e.g., Lucas, 2000, 8–9). Our islands were then swamped with settlers from the US and the military, with their racist and settler colonial projects of erasure and replacement.

We are blessed with huge and multiple archives of writing in ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi, in the forms of newspapers (80 to 100 from 1834 to 1948), books, journals, letters, government documents, laws, wills, international treaties, and so forth. Most histories of our ʻāina aloha (beloved land) have been written without consulting this immense archive. All of them are thus lacking in truthfulness and accuracy. Because of the replacement of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi with English, the majority of Kanaka ʻŌiwi cannot read the works of our ancestors in order to understand our own history. The violence done was to separate us from the thought worlds of our own families, impair our ability to know that we have an intellectual history, and deprive us of trust in our ancestral epistemologies. In addition, one may say that an extreme form of colonial epistemic oppression (see Dotson, above) has ensued, as our ancestors' philosophies are not studied or deemed of value outside of Hawaiian studies.

The purpose of this essay is not, however, to further analyze the damage done by this

epistemic violence and oppression primarily. Rather, this, as almost all of my previous and future work, is aimed at repairing the damage by writing our Native history based on sources written by our kūpuna (ancestors) in their own language, ʻōlelo Hawaiʼi. Therefore, my question for the project at hand is: Who worked to perpetuate our native language in the hostile or at best difficult conditions of the twentieth century? What efforts did they make? This is an important chapter in rewriting our history because some of us may have a sense that our recent ancestors did not do enough to perpetuate our language, which is now considered critically endangered. In fact, many Kānaka did their very best to teach, to write, and to publish in ʻōlelo Hawaiʼi in this period. Because of the language shift, most Kanaka do not know this.

Previously, I observed that our ancestors of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were committed to writing and publishing the knowledge and wisdom of their ancestors for the benefit of the youth of their day, and for generations afterwards. They anticipated the need of Kanaka Hawaiʻi of the future to understand their ancestors' ideas, insights, choices, and ways of life. I term this attitude 'moʻokūʻauhau (genealogical) consciousness,' because of how they (and many of us today) see ourselves as members of long genealogies (Silva 2017). Groundbreaking Kanaka historian Lilikalā Kameʻeleihiwa writes, 'Genealogies are perceived by Hawaiians as an unbroken chain that links those alive today to the primeval life forces—to the mana (spiritual power) that first emerged with the beginning of the world. Genealogies anchor Hawaiians to our place in the universe and give us the comforting illusion of continued existence' (1992, pp. 19–20). Beyond that, however, the writers discussed here made extraordinary efforts to record moʻolelo (history and literature) and all the other aspects of Kanaka life for the benefit of future generations.

This essay concentrates on WWII. I began my research on WWII because of my ongoing interest in Mary Kawena Pukui, the premier scholar of ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi in the twentieth century. Beginning in 1936, she spent her adult life working at the Bishop Museum on the language, music, dance, history, and social conditions of Kanaka. After the Pearl Harbor bombing in December 1941, life in the islands changed drastically for everyone. According to one account of the time:

> The beaches are strewn with … barbed wire. Guns, machine gun nests, and anti-aircraft positions are everywhere. … Trenches mutilate school grounds and the open spaces such as

parks. (Dye, 2000, p. 73)

Martial law, curfews, and dusk-to-dawn blackouts were instituted immediately after the bombing, and kept in place for over two years. The US military governed the islands and took over the courts, and all civil liberties were suspended (Scheiber and Scheiber, 2016).

Almost everyone, including many school children and teenagers, was recruited to work for the military and Pukui was no exception. She left her Hawaiian language work at the Museum and went to Pearl Harbor to assist in the production and dyeing of camouflage fabric and nets, which lei makers had been hired to do (Fawcett, 2017).

Although Pukui had to leave the work she loved at the museum, she still made a scholarly contribution: she wrote 'Ke Awa Lau o Puʻuloa: the Many-harbored Sea of Puʻuloa,' which was published in the *Annual Report of the Hawaiian Historical Society* for 1943. Puʻuloa is our name for the area called Pearl Harbor. She introduced this memoir as legends told to her by her uncle who lived at Puʻuloa and with whose family she vacationed regularly as a child. In it she tells the story of the shark guardian of Puʻuloa, Kaʻahupāhau, and the great affection the people who lived there had for the sharks. She includes her uncle's memory that men used to ride the sharks like horses, and the same uncle's cursing at a visitor who was preparing to shoot sharks with a rifle. She also appended to this memoir her own translation and notes on two short sections of a serial from a Hawaiian language newspaper of 1899, called 'Nā Wahi Pana o 'Ewa,' or 'Noted Places in 'Ewa.' In this way, Pukui continued her work in the Native language, culture, and history.

Besides Kawena Pukui, who else was keeping our language and culture alive? One Hawaiian language newspaper, *Ka Hoku o Hawaii,* was still publishing, bringing news and light entertainment to those who were monolingual or bilingual in Hawaiian. From this point on, I describe what was in that paper, concentrating on its contributions to perpetuating the language, and recording the names of its editors and important writers.

Hoku o Hawaii was the last Hawaiian-language paper published as a daily or weekly. All of the others had gone out of business as the numbers of people able to read Hawaiian kept shrinking. *Hoku* was the second-longest running paper, after *Nupepa Kuokoa.* It was established in 1906 in Hilo. W. K. Kino and Chas. H. Swain were the first two editors. In 1908 Stephen Langhern Desha, Sr. took over as the longest running editor, serving until 1932. He was also the pastor of

Haili Church in Hilo and served a term as senator in the Territorial legislature. When Desha retired, his son, Stephen L. Desha, Jr. took over for most of the following year, followed by Bernard H. Kelekolio for one month, and James Puuohau in 1936 and 1937. In 1938, Solomon Anakalea became the editor-in-chief, serving until the end in 1948. Even after Desha died in 1934, his family remained very involved in the paper; Edwin M. Desha, his nephew, had various positions as did his son-in-law, Harry K. Brown; and Evelyn Kahikina Pea Desha, his daughter-in-law, wrote a long-running column.

Hoku o Hawaii carried on the important literary and political traditions of Hawaiian papers: it published many serialized epics, including the Pele and Hiʻiaka epic. The last long serial concluded in March 1941 with 'Moolelo no Aukelenuiaiku,' which had been reprinted from the Fornander collection.

By the 1940s *Hoku*'s subscriptions were dwindling due to fewer people having the ability to read in Hawaiian. One of the mainstays of its income was publication of laws and other official notices of the territorial and county governments. Jochanan Aronowicz, a graduate student in Hawaiian language, has researched the law requiring publication of all laws in Hawaiian. He found that many attempts had been made to revoke this law via bills in the territorial legislature. One of them finally passed in 1943. The contracts to publish the laws apparently included publishing government notices, and I was somewhat alarmed to note that most of these are ads for sales of government lands. However, *Hoku* argued that there was a substantial number of people who read only Hawaiian and this was the only way for them to get the full text of laws. It also allowed those interested to read and compare the English and Hawaiian versions, and learn legal language in Hawaiian.

In December 1941, when martial law was instituted, all news media was suspended with few exceptions granted by the military government. Desha argued and won the right to keep publishing *Hoku o Hawaii*, and they resumed publication in February 1942.

The paper struggled and alternated between 2 pages and 4 pages per issue. The editor and board of the paper understood the survival of the paper to be intertwined with the survival of the language itself. *Hoku* published fourteen editorials about the life of the language between March 1941 and April 1944.

In April 1941 Anakalea wrote that the paper was working hard to keep going, and gave these reasons:

> No ko makou aloha no i na Hawaii kahiko a pela no me ka minamina ana i ka nalohia aku o [ka] kakou olelo makuahine, oia no ko makou kumu e haawi pau nei i ko makou manawa no ka hoopuka ana i keia nupepa. Aole he kumu e ae. Aole me ka uku nunui makou e hooikaika pauaho ole nei. (Na Makahiki O Ka Hoomanawanui Ana, 1941)

Anakalea is explaining here that it is love for the older Hawaiians and worry over the possible disappearance of the mother language that keeps the newspaper people giving their all for the paper. They certainly were not getting paid a lot.[9]

Several of those editorials were about efforts to teach the language, including a bill in the legislature introduced by Thomas Pedro, Jr. that would increase the amount of time that Hawaiian was being taught in the public schools. One of Anakalea's arguments for supporting the bill was that people were singing mele (songs in Hawaiian) with incorrect pronunciation. He wrote, 'i ka wa e lohe ai ka poe ike a makaukau e eha ana ko lakou pepeiao,' or when people who know the language hear this, it hurts their ears. He praises Henry Judd, professor of Hawaiian language at UH Mānoa; an attorney named Joseph P. Akau, who started adult classes in Hilo; J. P. Cockett on Maui, who had a class of twenty; and George Mossman. Anakalea urges support for these efforts.

Foreshadowing our Hawaiian language immersion schools, Anakalea stressed in several editorials that teaching children is of the utmost importance if we want our language to survive. For example,

> … aole o kakou hooikaika e a'o i ka kakou mau keiki i ka kakou olelo ponoi, aole no hoi i ke a'o ana i ka heluhelu a me ka hoomaopopo ana i ke kaona o na olelo Hawaii a i ko kakou wa e nalo aku ai e ku lohaloha ana ka kakou mau pua aku a pela me ka lakou mau pua aku, e hele loa ana i ke oki loa, aole he ike i ka kakou olelo makuahine. E ku ana lakou i ka hoaa a me ka hoka i ka wa e ninau ia mai ai lakou i na mea e pili ana i ka olelo Hawaii, a e hooili mai ana na keiki a kakou i na ahewa ana maluna o na makua, no ke ao ole aku ia lakou (Heaha Ke Kumu O Ka Hoa-a Ame Ka Hoka? 1942)

[9] Rather than translating, I am using the method called rigorous paraphrasing developed by Jamaica Heolimeleikalani Osorio (2018).

. . .

Anakalea argues here that parents are not making strenuous enough efforts to teach their children their own language, to read and understand kaona (the multiple layers of meaning characteristic of Hawaiian). The children thus stand mute and deprived when spoken to or asked about their native language. Two years later, he urges:

> He mea keia na kakou e noonoo ai me ke akahele loa, a e a'o i na keiki a kakou i ka olelo makuahine, mai kali hoi a hala ka manawa kupono, alaila mihi ma hope aku. 'I luna no ka ua, waele e ke pulu.' Oiai i ka wa opiopio no o ke keiki, a'o aku i ka olelo Hawai'i, a i nui ae ia, ua makaukau a walewaha ka kaua olelo. No laila, e hoomaka no i keia manawa, aole he hoopaneenee hou ana aku. (Eia Hou No Ia Mea Kauoha Nupepa, 1944).

He writes here that 'we,' inclusive of his readers, need to teach the language to their children right now or else they will regret it later. He uses an old Hawaiian proverb, 'Thatch the house while the rain is still up in the clouds,' i.e., before the rainy season starts, to illustrate his point.

In addition to these editorials, *Hoku o Hawaii* contributed to the life of the language through publication of original writing. They published several columns written by women in different parts of the islands. They were:

- Evelyn Kahikina Pea Desha in Hilo
- Hattie Linohaupuaokeko'olau Saffery Reinhardt, from Hāmākua and Kohala
- Alice Kanoekaapunionalani Banham from Maui
- Abbie Palea from Kaua'i
- Ruby Apiki Bright from Molokai
- Charlotte Bohling from Kailua-Kona

The first column I'll discuss is called 'Ko'u La,' and later 'Ko Maua La,' written by Evelyn Kahikina Pea Desha, who took the pen name of Kaimalino. Anakalea (presumably) introduces her first column (Kaimalino, 1943), noting that it is the desire of a Hawaiian mother of the younger generation to become more skilled in writing in Hawaiian that motivates her to write the column. It is a record of the daily life of their large extended family and network of friends and church associates. Evelyn Desha and her husband Rev. Stephen Desha Jr. traveled around the island quite

a bit so that he could conduct church services, weddings, and funerals.

Hattie Linohaupuaokekoʻolau Saffery Reinhardt wrote very frequently. She was politically active and ran for Representative in the Territorial Legislature in 1944. In one of her outstanding columns, she writes that she reads a lot, and really treasures the old nūpepa.

> He nui na mea naauao ma loko, na olelo noeau a na makua kahiko, na moolelo kahiko o Hawaii nei maloko o na nupepa. I ka heluhelu hou ana no ia lakou, he hauoli kou uhane i ka wa e ua ana o waho, aole e hiki i na hana e hana ia ma waho, e huli no au i loko o lakou, o ia hoi na nupepa a heluhelu i na moolelo kahiko, a loaa hou no iau kekahi mau manao naauao. (Reinhardt, 1942a).

In the old papers she finds wisdom, wise sayings of the older parents, and moʻolelo (history-literature) of Hawaiʻi . She says people should save their copies of *Hoku o Hawaii* so that they can go back and read treasures like these. We are indebted to her and all the other Kānaka who saved their newspapers so that we now share in their treasures.

In another column Reinhardt reported with much regret that the plantations were cutting down very old ʻulu (breadfruit) trees. At the time, the government had ordered people to plant food gardens in place of their lawns, and the plantations had taken advantage of this to cut these food-giving trees down in order to plant more sugarcane. She mourns the loss of the trees that had actually been filling the bellies of the plantation workers for some generations. (Reinhardt, 1942b).

The last writer I want to report on here is George K. Kane, Sr., who called his column ʻNa Iliili Hanau,ʼ which is also how he refers to himself. ʻNa Iliili Hanau,ʼ refers to pebbles that are born from larger rocks that come from an area in Kaʻū, where Kane was born. Yes, in Hawaiian onto-epistemology, some rocks can give birth. His self-naming is an act of aloha ʻāina, in which the ʻāina (land) and everything of it are our relatives. Kane himself is one of the pebbles that the land, a larger rock, gave birth to. Kane had been publishing his work on and off since at the least the 1910s in *Nupepa Kuokoa* and *Ke Alakai o Hawaii.* In the pages of *Hoku O Hawaii*, he is the last person to write historical accounts in Hawaiian until people started writing again in the 1980s, maybe later. In April 1942, he wrote about the Hawaiian counting system, giving the special words for 4, 40, 4,000 and so on. He explains that his father was a fisherman and this was system used to

count fish. In the style of his nūpepa-writing ancestors, he adds: ‘A i na he ike hou ae kekahi mawaho o ka mea i loaa i na iliili hanau o ka aina no ka helu Hawaii o kaua oluolu me ka mahalo pu, hoike a’e i ke akea no na pua a kakou, mai huna a nalowale loa aku’ (Na Iliili Hanau, 1942). He asks here that if others have further information on the counting system for them to publish that knowledge for the benefit of their descendants, so that it does not disappear forever. This is an example of the commitment to preserving and perpetuating ancestral knowledge for foreseen descendants that is moʻokūʻauhau consciousness. We can observe this practice from the earliest to this last of nūpepa ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi. In the nineteenth century, our kūpuna were observing knowledge die with knowledge holders as a result of epidemics and land dispossession. Here in the mid-twentieth century, our ancestors were watching it disappear as a casualty of settler colonialism.

All of these writers and the editors of *Hoku O Hawaii* worked very hard to keep our language alive and lively, even in the era of nā ao hākumakuma or dark clouds, as Solomon Anakalea often put it. They urged and cajoled people to learn and teach Hawaiian and to support the paper; they provided vocabulary of Hawaiian every week; and they produced original writing every week. Meanwhile Mary Kawena Pukui was writing on her own time, after working at Pearl Harbor every day. I think all of these hulu kupuna ʻōlelo Hawaiʻi deserve recognition, as well as our respect and gratitude.

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