"If you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country": An intersectional settler colonial analysis of Trump's "Save America" speech and other messages of (non)belonging

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Abstract

Donald Trump turned the presidency into a live-action reality television series comprising a chaotic blend of televised and tweeted intrigue. The nation's collective anxiety coalesced in a nationalistic, authoritarian denouement on January 6th, 2021. During Trump's speech at the Save American Rally, he returned to familiar themes, telling the story of a ravaged America and his role as its victimized hero. As Trump concluded his speech urging supporters to "fight like hell," rioters assailed the U.S. capitol revealing the violence of colonial invasion. To understand and, thus, respond to the insurrection, we must first recognize the dominant structures that create the conditions of its perpetration and excusal.

This intersectional analysis addresses the colonial impulse for violent exclusion through the interpretive framework of settler colonialism. Examining three interlocking themes, we incorporate historical and contemporary popular culture rhetorical devices to triangulate our findings. We illustrate how social identity and settler colonialism occur in popular culture at the intersections of American, Christian-nationalism, racialization, hetero-genderism, and ableism. Overall, our analysis explores how Trump prepared his base through years of cultural manipulation, promoting a populist, white vision of the world with Trump symbolic of its savior. To subvert these exploitations, we must participate in their deconstruction to destabilize the power of colonial institutions.

Keywords: intersectional analysis, settler colonial theory, capitol insurrection, Save America rally

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Turning the political arena into a live-action reality television show, Trump's presidency chaotically blended televised and tweeted intrigue (Dunn, 2020). Trapped in a feedback loop between Trump and the media, the nation's anxiety coalesced in a nationalistic, authoritarian denouement. On January 6, 2021, the president's proclamation to "fight like hell" resulted in insurrection (Trump, 2021, para. 4[1]). As rioters assailed the U.S. Capitol (Barry et al., 2021), the persistent violence of colonial invasion was revealed.

This article addresses the colonial impulse for violent exclusion through an intersectional analysis of Trump's "Save America" speech. Applying settler colonial theory (SCT; Veracini, 2015) as our interpretive vantage point, we center on Trump's messaging of imperial conquest (Tuck & Yang, 2012). As a historicized account of the centrality of violence in constructing identity, SCT provides theoretical grounding to understand how difference is communicated through popular culture to demarcate who belongs within settler societies (Rowe & Tuck, 2017).

Contextualizing Popular Culture and Trump

We situate popular culture as mediating strategies that reflect and constitute a society's dominant beliefs, practices, and objects, thus encompassing the "authentically popular" and "imposed upon" (Hall, 2018, p. 931) interconnected devices. In the United States, popular culture is implicated in settler colonial-derived constructions; intersectional Otherness; and communicating the boundaries and norms of class, ability, nation, language, gender, desire, race, and religion (Edwards & Esposito, 2019). Popular culture reifies societal beliefs of belonging, rights, and power, communicating what becomes "true" of people (Hall, 2018). Therefore,

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[1] All references to Trump's January 6th speech are as cited in the Senate Rules Committee full report Appendix B.

popular culture is not an innocent device, but an ideological institution manipulated by the interests of those in power to maintain hegemonic dominance.

Former President Trump leaned on popular culture to obtain power through a media spectacle-ism that transmitted exclusionary language advancing his brand's "us versus them" mentality (Austermuehl, 2020). Before his presidency, Trump depicted himself as the embodiment of opulence, success, and power through frequent media appearances (Hall et al., 2016), which were accompanied by Trump's use of media platforms to propel his racist, misogynist, xenophobic, classist, and ableist beliefs (Austermuehl, 2020).

As president, Trump courted controversy, employing divisive rhetoric to feed the news cycle, leading to what felt like a cultural omnipresence (Pruden, 2020). In Trump's treatment of the presidency as a television show, he consistently broke the fourth wall, commenting on his ratings and crowd size and conflating views, clicks, and bodies-at-rallies with political will (Dunn, 2020). Trump's prolific use of Twitter-broadcasted rallies and impromptu televised appearances guaranteed direct, unfiltered communication, providing the American public unfettered access to the presidency (Pruden, 2020). Trump delivered speeches through improvisation, utilizing off-the-cuff remarks and expletives, changing direction on a whim frequently in response to his crowds' reactions. From the first to the last public speeches of Trump's chaotic presidency, he leaned on the symbols, attitudes, and beliefs of the white supremacy and cultural imperialism foundational to the United States (Austermuehl, 2020). Trump's reliance on "American" values—settler colonial ideologies of white, heteropatriarchal, Christian nationalism—led to his electoral victory in 2016 and crystalized in an attempted coup four years later.

The Insurrection

The insurrection at the U.S. Capitol was the culmination of months of disinformation regarding a stolen election (Goodman et al., 2021). The President urged supporters to come to Washington D.C. on January 5th and 6th to stop Congress's certification of election results. Thousands of supporters attended the January 6th "Save America" rally, where Trump surrogates delivered opening salvos, urging supporters to action, including Giuliani's entreaty for a "trial by combat" (Goodman et al., 2021). Televangelist Paula White implored supporters to upend Trump's adversaries through acts of "holy boldness" (Bond & Neville-Shepard, 2021, p.10). At noon, Trump delivered his "Save America speech," and by 2:14 PM, Trump's insurrectionists breached the Capitol.

Of the estimated 800 rioters, about 10% represented far-right groups. Instead, most rioters comprised the typical Trump supporter-White, male, 34 years and older, employed, and Christian (Farivar, 2021). They represented a cross-section of geographic regions and classes, including the American gentry, white-collar workers, the working class, politicians, police, and pastors (Barry et al., 2021). Motivated by a variety of resentments, supporters-turned-insurrectionists shared fealty for Trump, and were "ready to 'bleed' for freedom" (Barry et al., 2021, para. 24). Trump denied any responsibility for the insurrection, whereas others suggest his speech directly incited rioters (Bond & Neville-Shepard, 2021).

Positionality

As white U.S. citizens, we recognize Trump's speeches are meant for us, his codification to give us cover so that we can maintain our complicity in white supremacist systems. Lorien grew up in a White, upper-middle-class heteronormative family in a southern town in the United States. My school bussed students from low-SES urban and rural neighborhoods to the large and

well-funded school in my suburban area. Interacting with racialized and working-class peers, I felt shame in recognizing my white-classed privileges. Without understanding these feelings, I tried to over-identify with my peers and suggest that I was "color-blind." Over time I have worked to understand what being White means and to be accountable for my embodied, epistemological whiteness. Living in Aotearoa (New Zealand) for my dissertation research brought about a growing awareness of myself as a settler-colonial. Before that move, I committed to researching against injustice; however, I focused on the experiences of those who lived it rather than those who committed it. In Aotearoa, I recognized that my ideas of justice stem from a Protestant upbringing steeped in individualistic and democratic Americanism-a justice that can be marginalizing. Since then, I research "my people," the White Americans who invade and brutalize, to create counter-colonial research and pedagogy.

Dewey is a White male from the southern United States. From an early age, I was steeped in my mother's Roman Catholic and my father's Methodist beliefs, as well as Rush Limbaugh and Newt Gingrich conservatism. Although I no longer identify with these belief systems, I acknowledge that I benefit from the structures associated with these ideologies as a settler-scholar. My participation in this analysis is an attempt to hold the white supremacist majority accountable, to call out how our elected leaders and popular culture persist in subjugation and exploitation. I believe it also demands that I use these additional benefits and privileges to advocate for the destruction of the white supremacist structures that exist within the political and social structures in the United States. As a person raised with many of the same cultural messages and codes as these insurrectionists, I turn my inbuilt cultural knowledge towards interrogation to confront the settler colonial impulse.

Research Purpose

In this article, we ground our intersectional analysis through the SCT lens to maintain the vantage point of settlers, representative of ourselves, Trump, and the insurrectionists. As we watched the events on January 6, we questioned how Trump's language evoked the protectionism, distanciation, and sovereignty of settler colonialism to mobilize his base into action. Guided by our commitment to unmask how popular culture transmits white supremacy while hiding settler violence, the current analysis was grounded by the question: *What settler colonial discourses does Trump utilize when speaking to the American public?*

Settler Colonial-Intersectional Analysis

Intersectionality is both lived experience and social theory that provides vantage points of the complicated intersections between social identities, discourse, and institutions of power (Collins, 2019). Crenshaw (2017) described intersectionality as overlapping and converging systems of power that create interconnected systems of oppression and identity. Ultimately, Crenshaw was interested in the "blind spots" (Collins, 2019, p. 26) that could develop in activist movements, denying the political and structural importance of multiple social identities (e.g., feminists' neglect of race; Combahee River Collective, 1978/2014).

Intersectional analyses (Edwards & Esposito, 2019) offer a dialogical heuristic to make sense of social worlds and social justice (Collins, 2019). Epistemologically, intersectional researchers engage their positionality, cultural artifacts, relationships, social contexts (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021), inequality, relationality, complexity, and social justice (Collins, 2019). Methodologically, intersectional researchers address power authorizations, how people conform to or resist power, and spatial and historical influences on perceptions and enactments of power (Esposito & Evans-Winters, 2021). Thus, an intersectional analysis suggests that power is a

constructed and constructive process occurring through multiple social domains and enacted on, by, and for people through multiple processes.

In 2019, Collins described intersectionality as a critical social theory that invites conversation between social actors "thinking about similar things within different social locations and from varying vantage points" (p. 28). As settler-scholars, we recognize that our vantage is always-already entangled with settler colonial realities, ideologies, and purposes. In the intersectional matrix, we purposefully center SCT to attend to "the historical processes that have created our contemporary moment [and] have affected everyone at various points along their transits with and against empire" (Byrd, 2011, p. xxxix).

Settler Colonial Theory in the Intersectional Matrix

The colonial mythology of the United States is that settlement was a historic event guided by manifest destiny, wherein superior Europeans tamed empty and uncivil lands (Glenn, 2015)— a lie created so settlers could deny the legacy of violence, decimation, and genocide that was required to "empty" the land (Veracini, 2015). SCT confronts untruths of the civilized tamers to highlight how the invasion of settlers is a societal structuration rather than an event. Settling requires the perpetual dispossession and brutalization of Indigenous and exogenous Others that occur through discourses, policies, and practices instructive of who belongs in the settlements (Morgensen, 2011).

Undergirding this right to or lack of belonging are cultural scripts on the worth and visibility of people, which in settler colonies developed as a triadic hierarchy of otherness (Jordan, in press). In this hierarchy, settlers are ascendant at the triangle's apex, while Indigenous and Exogenous peoples are positioned in oppositional lower vertices (Veracini, 2015). Settlers are persons of European descent who seek to conquer and transform foreign lands into

representations of the world left behind. Settling first requires that the land be cleared from any Indigenous nation that stands in the way. In the United States, indigenous is representative of the multiplicity of nations that comprise American Indians, Alaska Natives, and Native Hawaiians. Settlers in the United States have perpetually emptied indigeneity through policies and practices of genocide, assimilation, removal, land commodification and theft, and cultural appropriation (Veracini, 2010). As the Indigenous "disappeared," the exogenous were transported to the colonies to do the "dirty work of nation building" (Jordan, 2021, p. 274). The term exogenous represents people of non-sovereign displacement, recognizing all non-Native people have (been) moved across time and space to settle on dispossessed Indigenous lands. Yet, exogenous people are differentiated from settlers through the "interconnected manifestations of white-supremacist capitalism," which regulate non-belonging (Dhamoon, 2015, p. 23).

Within the triadic hierarchy, the separation of Indigenous-exogenous-Settler belies their intercentricity. That is, the creation of the ideal settler as superior, white, male, and classed required the creation of dehumanized Others (King, 2019). By dehumanizing Indigenous and exogenous as savage and fungible (King, 2019), settlers reproduce themselves as fully human and thereby responsible for the sovereign management of land and bodies. For settlers in the United States, humanizing through dehumanization occurred via turning land and person into commodities, aided by creating race (Saito, 2020). To distanciate from the Indigenous and exogenous, settlers developed themselves as the White race, cementing their sovereignty and political, social, psychological, and economic entitlements (Saito, 2020). Whiteness became a prerequisite for being fully human, a means of distinguishing who was superior, the "norm," and sovereign. By naturalizing whiteness, the English language, Christianity, binary genders, and

able-bodiedness, the image of the indigenized American has become imbedded in the fabric of the nation (Morgensen, 2011).

Settler colonial studies represents an expansive field with origins in indigenous activism, Black studies, and critical whiteness studies (King et al., 2020). Theorizing from a settler colonial lens offers much for the study of injustice in the United States. However, critiques of the theory suggest that researchers can focus too extensively on essentialized meanings of Indigeneity and exogeneity, overlooking the intercentricity of race and racism (Carey & Silverstein, 2020). Therefore, we are guided by Dhamoon (2015), who suggested that SCT, in conversation with intersectionality, "foregrounds the multiple intersecting manifestations, mechanisms, and adjoining socio-political processes of settler colonialism" (p. 33) and reproduces the inextricable layers of intersectional subordination (Crenshaw, 2017). That is, the continual act of settlement as an invasion is centered in analysis to understand how identities of power and oppression are (re)produced through time. Further, inscribing settler colonialism as a driver of intersectional power addresses the fear, supremacy, and ownership that white people are taught and rely upon and how popular culture becomes a tool in their (our) complicity (Rowe & Tuck, 2017).

Analysis

To contextualize Donald Trump's "Save America" speech, we watched videos of the rally, bystander clips, and videos from the day of the insurrection. We then read the official transcript of the speech multiple times. Utilizing first cycle, in vivo coding, we sorted the data into pools of meaning (Saldaña, 2021). Moving into second cycle, pattern coding, we examined the *whats* and *hows* representative of Trump's social world (Saldaña, 2021). We also iteratively analyzed cultural artifacts such as political cartoons, popular art, film, advertisements, memes,

and tweets[2] to triangulate our analysis. Throughout this process, we memo'ed to make interpretive theoretical connections between intersectionality and SCT, exploring how Trump prepared his base for the insurrection promoting a settler vision of the world.

Findings: Calling on "Real" Americans

Trump's "Save America" speech marked the culmination of a presidency distinguished by highly partisan and oppressive rhetoric that catalyzed the settler spirit (Austermuehl, 2020). The partisanship Trump evoked was not the prototypical Democrat versus Republican but a settler colonial populist "us" versus "them" (Pruden, 2020). The speech is replete with Trump's familiar narrative wherein he depicts himself as a victimized hero protecting "real" Americans from a country under attack. In this speech, Trump calls on his supporters to defend him from his looming defeat, swaying his supporters into violence after years of indoctrination.

Our first theme, *"Real" Americans*, explores how Trump relied on pioneering and militarism to portray his supporters as "real" American patriots—members of the settler class that have become indigenized to the United States. In our second theme, *Hypermasculinity, Weakness, "Stiffs and . . . Stupid People,"* we illustrate how Trump positioned Others in his fight for America. Our final theme, *A Nation Always at Risk of Invasion*, illustrates how indigenized Americans live in perpetual fear of invasion. The narrative of perpetual threat was core to Trump's success with his base; below, we discuss these fears as extensions of Christian nationalism and American nativism.

In the following, we examine these three themes as representative of Trump's settler colonial messaging, triangulating the themes by incorporating historical and contemporary popular cultural artifacts to develop a larger picture of how social identity and settler colonialism

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[2] Trump's tweets are cited by date, resourced from https://www.thetrumparchive.com/.

intersect in Trump's America. We present these themes linearly at the intersections of

nationalism, religiosity, racialization, genderism, and ableism. However, we acknowledge these

themes are interlocking identities and discourses, not so easily unwoven.

"Real" Americans

In settler colonies, the establishment of White supremacist hierarchal identities of race,

gender, religion, ability, and class distinguished between "us" and "them." The inherent

meanings associated with these identities drove settlers' claim to sovereignty and the influence of

the "constitutive hegemony of the settler" (Veracini, 2010, p. 103). Trump adeptly employed the

terms "we" and "ours" throughout his presidency to demarcate American belonging. In his

campaign announcement, Trump (2015) moved from "you" the aggrieved to "we" who will save

America, enfolding himself with his supporters. From these first official remarks, Trump set the

stage for four years of divisive rhetoric playing on fears that the American way of life is under

threat and that he, the settler colonial pinnacle—a powerful, rich, white man—can save "us."

In the "Save America" speech, Trump used the term "our country" 25 times, drawing a

line between who belongs to and who seeks to destroy the nation. Trump frequently employed a

pioneering rhetoric, to instruct on who built the country. The mythology of the indigenized-

settler is the story that through hard work and toil white Americans made the land, and in so

doing, were made indigenous to the land. This indigenized settler is seen as early as Gast's

(1872) painting, *American Progress*, where White men farm across the land (e.g., tame it), as the

"untamable" Indigenous and buffalo, run further into darkness. In the present day, the narrative

has been reproduced in television programs such as *Little House on the Prairie*, or the recent

series *1883*. Programs such as these romanticize the hardships of pioneers and Europeans'

moving West to mythologize the process of adversity as ultimately creating the American

(Wilson, 2021). On January 6th, Trump spoke directly to this indigenized American—whom he framed as hardworking, White Christians, who as described by Trump "love our country. We have overwhelming pride in this great country, and we have it deep in our souls," reminding supporters that "you're the people that built this nation."

The act of pioneering also required the creation of a "civilized" law and order. Trump modeled his persona as a "law and order" president, who spoke for supporters across organized militias, such as the Proud Boys, and pro-policing groups, such as the Blue Lives Matter movement (Gardner, 2020). Trump also gave racial cues to his white supporters to clarify who the law was intended for. He was typically silent about the police murders of Black people, except when using the last words of Eric Garner and many others ("I can't breathe") to grotesquely mock his political rivals (McIntosh, 2020).

Trump, instead, evoked the concept of "law and order," with deep roots in American history, wherein armed civilians take up the law to confront an impotent government (Gardner, 2020). Loyalty to the country above government is a foundational trope that epitomizes the rebellious spirit lauded in the Revolutionary War, embodied in the Civil War's "rebels" of the confederacy, and explicit in the 1800s "Know-Nothing" party, which aimed to protect the rights of what the party termed "native Americans," the indigenized citizenry over the government (Levine, 2001).

Antiestablishmentarianism is core to Trump's anti-elite, rural versus urban, rich versus working-poor rhetoric embraced by Blue Lives Matter, a reactionary pro-policing and militia movement (Shanahan & Wall, 2021). Blue Lives Matter is concerned with defeating those who wish to strip them of their militaristic might, seeing these threats as anti-American, and embracing "armed friendlies" who fight "agents of political violence" (Shanahan & Wall, 2021,

p. 14). Therefore, the seeming paradox of witnessing Blue Lives Matter rioters beat the Capitol Police is more clearly understood, as the Capitol Police were ultimately betraying America's true "patriots" (Shanahan & Wall, 2021). It is also no coincidence that Marvel's superhero, Captain America, was seen throughout the insurrection. Captain America, a super-soldier and perfect example of an American: white, male, and strong, had a rebellious nature where he was "loyal to nothing," but the American "Dream" (Spinelli, 2021, para. 6). Throughout the "Save America" rally and subsequent insurrection, rioters were dressed as Captain America, carried his shield, waved flags, and wore t-shirts depicting Trump as Marvel's hero, symbols meant to illustrate supporters' American loyal-rebellious ideal (Dalsheim & Starrett, 2021).

Trump consistently used militaristic-pioneering-indigenizing imagery to frame his supporters as "proud citizens like you [who] helped build this Country—and together, we are taking back our Country" (October 13, 2020). To take back the country, Trump implored "real patriots" to stand for the "integrity of our glorious republic" and "stop the steal." Trump makes clear throughout the speech that what sets real Americans apart from Others is their love and protection of the country over all other concerns. Trump established "real patriots" as juxtaposed against the "people that tore down our nation" through ableist, gendered, heterosexist, Christian settler constructions of social identity.

Hypermasculinity, Weakness, "Stiffs and . . . Stupid People"

Throughout U.S. history, settler sovereignty depended on the creation of intersections of oppression and domination, wherein whiteness, masculinity, and class determined one's relative belonging. King (2019) describes this as the process of humanizing oneself through the dehumanization of Others, which illustrates why whiteness was originally created—to unite Europeans against indigeneity and exogeneity (Austermuehl, 2020). Trump's, and therefore his

supporters', ascendance in society depends on restrictive inclusion. The "Save America" speech illustrates how Trump positioned Others in his fight for America, wherein he differentiated his supporters from the "weak" and "stupid" people who voted against him.

Settler colonial masculinity, grounded in white superiority, dominance, and paternalism, is foundational to the United States (Glenn, 2015) and emblematic of Trumpian posturing. The violent rape of lands, bodies, and resources established the settler colonies. Thus, the settler came to symbolize conquest through strength and virility (Jordan, 2021). Intersections of sexuality and gender encouraged the purification of white women and the over-sexualization and savageization of racialized men and women, justifying white men's violence (Arvin et al., 2013). White women benefited from these characterizations and, leaning into them, claimed their authoritative place as the "mothers of the nation" (Collins, 1999, p. 118). In so doing, "nationalism becomes the language through which sexual control and repression is justified, and masculine prowess is expressed and exercised (Mayer, 2000, p. 1). Such empowerment occurs at the expense of all who do not represent white hypermasculinity and asks all genders and sexualities to conform and negotiate their erasure or repression.

As the definition of masculinity was created by and for white men based on heterosexual dominance and feminized weakness, it is no surprise Trump's base would support his status as a violent protector (Deckman & Cassese, 2021). In film and television, the tough-guy persona is reiterated, informing viewers that "boys don't cry," women are objects of male relief, and LGBTQ+ people are "unnatural." Trump and supporters' emotional apathy are (literally) bought into, as they purchase and display flags with Trump standing on tanks, surrounded by

ammunition with "fuck your feelings" emblazoned below (Sharlet, 2020).

By the time Trump gave his "Save America" speech, his supporters were indoctrinated into his embrace of virile hypermasculinity. In the January 6th speech, Trump repeatedly claimed it was due to the weakness of Republicans that he lost the election. He asks supporters to stand up for Trump, just as Trump stood up for them. Trump baited his audience with ideas of gendered and sexualized masculinity when he stated, "You'll never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength, and you have to be strong." Dog whistles throughout his speech converge on ableism and genderism, for example, when he turned on Georgia's Republican governor, suggesting he is too small, and therefore weak, to stand up for Trump. This type of macho positioning emboldens Trump's evangelical and alt-right bases, who have decried the moral failings of a nation that accepts multiple genders and sexualities (Stewart, 2020).

Across his base, Trump is consistently drawn as a strong and virile male with a chiseled body and jutting chin. He is depicted as defiant in the face of powers that allow for the country's destruction, as seen in images where his face is imposed on Sylvester Stallone's cinematic protagonists, Rocky and Rambo (Dalsheim & Starrett, 2021). Trump ended his speech by stating that his supporters should embolden the weak with "the kind of pride and boldness that they need to take back our country." At that moment, Trump relayed to the audience that they too can embody masculine whiteness to protect and defend the nation.

Trump's masculinity intersected with the ableism he infused throughout his politics, seen as early as his original policy guide, *Crippled America: How to Make America Great Again*. Harnish (2017) argued Trump used "ableist rhetoric to court rural, working-class whites; his repeated use of metaphors equating bodily difference with weakness and failure played to a fear of disability that is deeply embedded in rural, white working-class culture" (p. 423). Trump

consistently described those who opposed him as "stupid," "dumb," and "lame," words deeply ableist and common in U.S. lexicon (Harnish, 2017). Trump's ableism flourished in the 2020 campaign, where he consistently denigrated his opponent, interweaving attacks on mental acuity, physical ability, and age. For example, Trump retweeted a photo of Biden in a wheelchair in an assisted-living facility carrying the slogan "Biden for pResident," effectively reifying an image of Biden as "slow," "crazy," "sleepy," and "dementia-muddled." Simultaneously, Trump announced his own mental abilities through tweets claiming his "I.Q. is one of the highest" (May 8, 2013), and qualified himself as "a very stable genius!" (January 6, 2018). These contrasting images were meant to paint Trump as someone who can lead the settler nation because he is a representative ideal—not only white and male but also able.

Intersecting with settler colonial anti-immigration and anti-Indigenous discourses, mental acuity was a target for politicians seeking to limit the powers of the less "desired" classes (Jordan, 2022). In the 18th and 19th centuries, measurements of the skull and newly developed IQ tests were introduced to indicate human intelligence and argue against women's suffrage and the abolition of slavery (Collins, 1998). Such testing was meant to establish "fair" and "impartial" restrictions on immigration to respond to public xenophobia and fears of the impending "race suicide" (Collins, 1998), encouraged through political cartoons, newspaper articles, and poetry that portrayed the dangers of "feeble-mindedness" (DeJarnette, 2009).

The fervor against diminished mental and physical abilities erupted during negative eugenic sterilization campaigns to constrain "unwanted" populations (Collins, 1998). At the same time, better babies and fitter family contests encouraged the standardization of positive eugenics to protect the white race (Jordan, 2022). This cultural legacy lives on through U.S. pageantry's reliance on judging the quality of a woman by her looks (e.g., genetic expression),

the intersections of patriarchal womanhood, and exclusive definitions of gender (Friedman, 2020). Trump embraces the history of American eugenics as the previous owner of multiple beauty pageant franchises, just as he describes his voters as having "good genes," people who, as stated in his January 6th speech, "you're stronger, you're smarter, you've got more going than anybody." Throughout popular culture, ableism perpetuates language similar to Trump, with a lack of representation and framing people with disabilities as pitiable. In any case, the message is that disability is bad. When Trump spoke to his supporters on January 6th, he embraced their culturally ableist awareness, playing on their fears that unless they fight for Trump, they will "have a president . . . who was voted on by a bunch of stupid people."

A Nation Always at Risk of Invasion

The perpetual threat of invasion is a critical component of SCT (Veracini, 2015). In the United States, White Europeans positioned themselves as ordained by God to civilize the untamed lands of North America. Yet taming is a savage endeavor, wherein dominance requires a brutalization that contradicts images of a non-savage and peaceful civilization. To reconcile the discrepancies between enacted brutality and imagined peace, the United States projects the narrative that its violence is, and has always been, a defensive measure (Veracini, 2015). Settlers rewrite their narratives as besieged by Others from first colonial contact, an "invasion" that threatens American "native culture," normalizing the violence and conquest of Exogenous and Indigenous peoples (Glenn, 2015). Therefore, in the United States, there is no peace without violence, and peace is only promised once the nation's enemies are defeated. Settlers' vacillations between war and peace were a hallmark of Trumpian populism, illustrated in his inaugural address when Trump (2017) stated:

We do not seek to impose our way of life on anyone, but rather to let it shine as an

example. We will shine for everyone to follow . . . and unite the civilized world against

radical Islamic terrorism, which we will eradicate completely from the face of the Earth.

Throughout the 2020 campaign, Trump primed his supporters for the coming insurrection,

declining to commit to a peaceful transition of power, and reintroducing the 2016 "Stop the

Steal" slogan (Goodman et al., 2021). Following the election, Trump's January 6 speech was a

clear call to arms where he extolled supporters to be strong and to fight for him and the nation.

Supporters responded by chanting "fight for Trump," "stop the steal," and "take the Capitol." In

the last two minutes of the speech, Trump transparently averred, "We fight. We fight like hell.

And if you don't fight like hell, you're not going to have a country anymore," reminding his base

that "real" patriots must violently defend their rightful place. In the following, we describe how

Trump leaned on Christian Nationalism and White Nativism to provoke the unsettling anxieties

of White Americans who fear the usurpation of cultural and political dominance (Berlet &

Sunshine, 2019).

Christian Nationalism

In the United States, Christian Nationalism is a political theology centered on the right of

predominantly White, Christian, native-born Americans to rule, with all Others posing a threat to

the social order. Christian Nationalism is tied into the belief systems of evangelicals, a large

segment of Trump's base (Stewart, 2020), and other conservative Christian sects. The beliefs

among Christian Nationals and evangelicals are implicated in the settler colonial mindset that the

founding of the United States was inevitable, ordained by the Christian God to save those framed

as "savage." Folded into this narrative is the image of the victimized Christian who left Europe to

escape persecution. The Bible is replete with savior-victim narratives, especially seen in the

portrayal of Jesus Christ as the anointed savior of man, persecuted for his political, cultural, and spiritual will (Stewart, 2020).

Trump's presidency was a four-year public indulgence in settler self-victimization, portraying himself as a savior to "Make America Great Again" who was subsequently "persecuted by some very bad, conflicted & corrupt people" (March 3, 2019). Positioning himself as the anti-hero, Trump vacillated between America's savior and victim, branding which spoke directly to Christian Nationalists and evangelicals (Bond & Neville-Shepard, 2021). Victimization is core to Christian Nationalists' "spiritual warfare" beliefs, which coalesce around the invasion of their beliefs at the hands of LGBTQ people, Black and Brown people, feminists, environmentalists, immigrants, and non-Christians (Stewart, 2020). In popular culture, this warfare, traditionally described as "culture wars," emerged as early as the 1920's when politicians played on the fears of rural White Americans (Stewart, 2020). Since then, the warfare metaphor has been central in the rise of Christian Nationalism.

During the "Save America" rally, speakers leaned on "end-off-days" messaging to "goad people into action by naming the evil threat and attaching it to a need to act because 'time is running out' . . . the classic apocalyptic timetable" (Berlet & Sunshine, 2019, p. 487). Trump's speech on January 6 made plain that the country was on the precipice of the forewarned spiritual-cultural war. Throughout, he illustrated the hero-victim dialectic by describing how he had saved Republicans, the courts, and the military, yet they turned their back on him. For example, Trump suggested that "the Republicans, I helped them get in. I helped them get elected…and then all of a sudden. . . It's like, 'Gee maybe I'll talk to the president sometime later'." Trump similarly described how the Supreme Court abandoned him, even though he had "fought like hell for them." Trump's transitions between having saved America with messages of betrayal contributed

to the ongoing refrain of Trump's persecution. Franklin Graham, son of popular evangelical icon

Billy Graham, made plain this comparison following the insurrection. Posting to Facebook,

"After all that he has done for our country, you would turn your back and betray him so quickly,"

followed by direct comparison to the motives of Judas when he wrote, "And these ten, from his

own party, joined in the feeding frenzy. It makes you wonder what the thirty pieces of silver

were that Speaker Pelosi promised for this betrayal" (Graham, 2021).

Amid the symbols of rebellious patriotism at the insurrection, religious imagery such as

life-sized crosses, "Jesus 2020" campaign flags, t-shirts that read "Proud American Christian,"

and protest signs stating "Thank You, Lord, Donald v. Goliath" were littered among Trump

paraphernalia. The sound of shofars, a Jewish ritual instrument co-opted by evangelicals to rally

for the spiritual war, accompanied rioters as they marched to "take back" their country from the

invasion of those who Trump called the "emboldened" and "corrupt." Trump's base represents a

cross-section of America and can be hard to define. However, it is clear that they are Christian

and White (Bond & Neville-Shepard, 2021), supporters whose beliefs intersect and reproduce

U.S. hegemonies, such as whiteness, genderism, nationality, and class. While not all the

insurrectionists were Christian, the rhetoric of the rioters reflected the aggressive,

hypermasculine, and white supremacist fusion of God and country baked into US settler

American Nativism.

American Nativism

Nativism is the "ritualized demonization of an 'other' seen as unraveling the threads that

weave together the idealized unified 'traditional' national culture and the core ethnic stock"

(Berlett & Sunshine, 2019, p. 481). Trump campaigned on a nativist "America First" agenda to

clarify he would be the champion of native-born Americans (Finley & Esposito, 2019). Trump

also reignited historical disinformation campaigns against immigrants through the language of invasion, describing the assured demographic, territorial, and economic subjugation of "real" Americans to the undeserving exogenous immigrants (Finley & Esposito, 2019).

In the United States, American nativism has relied on the language of contamination and infestation to dehumanize the exogenous (Johnson & Villazor, 2019). For example, in political cartoons, Chinese immigrants have been depicted as locusts that would destroy American culture and thus worthy of extermination (Dewey, 2007). Trump relied on these dehumanization tactics to characterize the "infestations" (July 3, 2018) of immigrants and refugees from "shithole countries" to stoke fear in White America (Sirleaf, 2020, p. 7). In 2020, the threat of infestation-invasion came sharply into focus as Trump positioned the global COVID-19 pandemic as a battle brought from foreign shores, employing terms such as "Kung Flu," prompting a sharp rise in Sinophobic hate crimes (Sirleaf, 2020).

In the "Save America" speech, Trump reminded supporters that he "puts America first," protecting the nation from foreign invasion, stating, "the wall is built, we're doing record numbers at the wall." He then renewed fears of the Democrats' loyalty to Others, stating they "want to take down the wall . . . let everyone flow in," warning of an impending siege on the Southern Border, where "the caravans are forming again. They want to come in again and rip off our country."

Nativists also fear cultural invasion from within U.S. borders, where the ever-present menace of cultural indoctrination looms. Through tactics such as positioning the nation as a "melting pot," White Americans adopt ideologies of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva & Mayorga, 2020). Claiming to "not see color" belies the fact that in White America, no matter

how many generations the racialized exogenous have lived in the country, they are targeted as foreign threats (Bonilla-Silva & Mayorga, 2020).

On January 6, Trump urged his supporters to recognize "our country has been under siege for a long time" by the nation's increasing diversity. Hence, a cultural invasion, wherein "they also want to indoctrinate your children in school by teaching them things that aren't so . . . It's all part of the comprehensive assault on our democracy," to reference the widespread, conservative disinformation campaign against Critical Race Theory (Kendi, 2021).

Core to White Americans' denial of the racialized exogenous' belonging is the concept of territory. Territory is not only land, but the exogenous and Indigenous bodies, capital, and minds that are recreated as fungible commodities to be owned or diminished by settlers (King, 2019). Trump's speech highlighted the settler colonial tendency for White people to commodify an otherwise threatening exogeneity. On January 6th, Trump stated, "We set a record with Hispanic, with the Black community," implying Black and Brown people are not included in "we" the people. Trump's allusion to "getting" the Black and Latina/o vote is a reminder that racialized people are resources, commodities, and fungible (King, 2019), serving the interests of white Americans. Trump (2016) illustrated Blackness-as-territory when he enjoined his audience to "look at *my* African American over here" at a campaign rally.

In the speech, Trump reminds supporters that racialized voters cannot be entirely trusted, suggesting that he did not lose the vote to "real Americans." Instead, "the problem is Fulton County, home of Stacey Abrams." It is no coincidence that Black residents comprise 44% of Fulton County (Georgia) or that Abrams, a woman who does not accord with Trumpian femininity, is a Black woman Trump could not control (Walsh, 2021).

Conclusions

Our goal in this article was to explicate how Trump relied on the images and words of settler dominance through an intersectional analysis of his "Save America" speech. At the same time, as white researchers who work within the onto-epistemological imperial academy, who embody whiteness and speak the colonizer's language, we are cautious when working from theories made for and by persons marginalized from these embodiments. Critiques of white scholars' adoption and subsequent contortion of critical theories show us how we engage in epistemological dispossession and depoliticization when using theory to speak from a position we do not occupy (Tuck & Yang, 2012). "Occupation" is, after all, a white settler colonial habitus. Therefore, we intentionally utilized SCT to guide our analysis, a process that asked us to remain watchful of our biases while guiding our understanding of both Trump's coded and overt settler rhetoric. Using intersectionality as a foundational groundwork, we incorporated the intercentricity of multiple forms of dominations in settler, Indigenous, and exogenous racialization.

Throughout his presidency, Trump appeared virtually inescapable in popular culture due to his ability to insert himself into any news cycle and cultural resistance against him. By leaning on divisive rhetoric, racist imagery, ableist and gendered discourse Trump used the fears and exaltations of a settler colonial nation to garner fervent and violent support. As we have argued in this article, the attack at the U.S. capital was not spontaneous, instead fomented by years of this settler colonial messaging of invasion and distanciation. Across his presidency, Trump primed his supporters with over 26,000 tweets and improvisational speeches where he depicted his supporters as the "backbone and the heartbeat of our country" (December 17th, 2017). Trump consistently argued that while "We were born free," Americans could only "stay free, as long as I am your President!" (October 16th, 2019). Branding himself as America's anti-hero, he wedged

himself and his supporters against those who would destroy it. Trump also distanced himself

from the "elites," feeding into the antiestablishmentarianism that united Trump voters across

geographic and classed lines despite his billionaire status. At the same time, Trump indulged the

self-victimization that speaks to nativists, evangelicals, and Christian nationalists who live under

persecutory fear of the impending cultural and spiritual takeover. Trump relied on these

rhetorical tactics to build his argument for the promised war between "us" and "them."

On January 6th, Trump mimicked the preamble of the constitution, aligning himself with

his supporters when he called on them as "we, the people," to defend the nation and, in so doing,

Trump, America's victimized anti-hero. Within the first 15 minutes of the 70-minute speech,

Trump stated, "I know that everyone here will soon be marching over to the Capitol building to

peacefully and patriotically make your voices heard." Jettisoning the illusion of peace almost as

immediately as he signaled it, Trump repeatedly called on his supporters' "strength," imploring

them to "fight." Trump's rapid transition from peace to war surfaced the paradox of settler

colonies, in that settling is peaceful only if unimpeded, and when met with resistance, settling is

violent. Trump called on his "amazing patriots," "determined to defend and preserve government

of the people, by the people and for the people" to "stop the steal."

As authors and activists concerned with the spread of White supremacist Imperialism, we

were especially struck by the phraseology of "stop the steal." Watching as the insurrectionists

descended on the Capitol building, we were reminded of the unabashed freedom that White

Americans who illegitimately occupy stolen land hold. The entitlement of the settler-conqueror

mindset lies within the *inalienable rights* afforded to the invaders who steal lands and bodies to

make themselves more fully human (King, 2019). Images of insurrectionists hanging from the

Capitol building contrasted sharply with the knowledge that the building they occupied was

erected on land stolen from the Nacotchtank—a building constructed by enslaved Africans and made from stone quarried from Patowomeck and Paleoindians stolen lands along the Acqui Creek. The imagery of insurrectionists moving freely also sharply contrasted with the brutal imagery seen during police actions taken against anti-racist protestors, further reminding non-White Americans and their allies of their "place" in U.S. society.

The Capitol insurrection was merely a "physical manifestation" of settler colonial beliefs held deep in the hearts and minds of White, Christian America. As we wrestle with these images, policies, and practices of settler exclusion, we must recognize the dominant structures that create the conditions of its perpetration and excusal. The colonial mindset gives way to complicity, conscious or not, of the United States' normalization of violence, exclusion, and the dehumanization and demarcation of alterity (Rowe & Tuck, 2017; Veracini, 2015). To subvert these exploitations, scholars of popular culture have a role in destabilizing colonial institutions' power by deconstructing and challenging the popular media that reproduces its dominance.

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