



Photography and Resistance

Anticolonialist Photography
in the Americas

Claire Raymond

palgrave
macmillan

Photography and Resistance

Claire Raymond

Photography and Resistance

Anticolonialist Photography in the Americas

palgrave
macmillan

Claire Raymond
Department of Art
The University of Maine
Orono, ME, USA

ISBN 978-3-030-96157-2 ISBN 978-3-030-96158-9 (eBook)
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-96158-9>

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive licence to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022

This work is subject to copyright. All rights are solely and exclusively licensed by the Publisher, whether the whole or part of the material is concerned, specifically the rights of translation, reprinting, reuse of illustrations, recitation, broadcasting, reproduction on microfilms or in any other physical way, and transmission or information storage and retrieval, electronic adaptation, computer software, or by similar or dissimilar methodology now known or hereafter developed.

The use of general descriptive names, registered names, trademarks, service marks, etc. in this publication does not imply, even in the absence of a specific statement, that such names are exempt from the relevant protective laws and regulations and therefore free for general use. The publisher, the authors and the editors are safe to assume that the advice and information in this book are believed to be true and accurate at the date of publication. Neither the publisher nor the authors or the editors give a warranty, expressed or implied, with respect to the material contained herein or for any errors or omissions that may have been made. The publisher remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Cover illustration: Tracy Immordino / Alamy Stock Photo.

This Palgrave Macmillan imprint is published by the registered company Springer Nature Switzerland AG.

The registered company address is: Gewerbestrasse 11, 6330 Cham, Switzerland

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Written during the pandemic, and during a time of extraordinary personal upheaval, this book could never have been completed without support from friends and family. I am grateful to Karena D’Silva, Wendy Satin Rappaport, and Joan Braun for unfailing friendship. Tremendous thanks to Anna Warner for providing image permissions support. Lucy Williams and Chris Stinson are the best editors alive, and helped me cross the finish line. Conversations with Shelley Niro are the treasure of this book. I am very grateful to the artist for her time and generosity of spirit. Thanks also to my great editor, Lina Aboujieb, of Palgrave Macmillan. As always, the greatest debt and gratitude goes to my husband, Mark, and son, Ioannis. As my son pointed out when he was a toddler, I am much better at writing than at cooking. How lucky to have a family that thrives in precisely that arrangement. I acknowledge also that the land of Virginia, where I wrote the first draft of this book, and the land of Maine, where I write now completing the book, respectively are the ancestral homelands and unceded territory of the Powhatan, the Chickahominy, the Mattaponi, and the Monacan (in Virginia) and (in Maine) of the Maliseet, the Passamaquoddy, the Penobscot, and the Micmac—holistically the Wabanaki. I am grateful for these lands that held me in the task of writing this book.

All mistakes are mine.

CONTENTS

1	Introduction: Anticolonialist Photography in the Americas	1
	<i>Decolonizing the Photographic Imagination</i>	4
	<i>The Photograph as Act</i>	9
	<i>What Disappears, What Persists</i>	11
	<i>On Theory, Methodology, Identity</i>	11
	<i>Refusals</i>	14
	<i>Photography and Disappearance</i>	15
	<i>Theory of the Invisible</i>	21
2	Seen and the Unseen	31
	<i>A Small Matter of Wars</i>	32
	<i>Ancestors</i>	33
	<i>Monuments and Photographs</i>	36
	<i>The Naked Image</i>	38
	<i>The Persistence of Colonialist Memory</i>	39
3	Staging Returns	47
	<i>The “Un-Document”</i>	48
	<i>The Right to Look</i>	50
	<i>Visibility Against Surveillance</i>	54
4	Empire’s Battlefields	59
	<i>Ten Pretty Little Indian Houses</i>	62

	<i>Playing War</i>	70
	<i>Against Erasure</i>	72
	<i>Ideas of Origin</i>	74
	<i>Temporal Frames</i>	74
	<i>Vistas</i>	77
5	Empire's Dirty Wars	87
	<i>Elegy and Mourning</i>	88
	<i>Memory and Return</i>	88
	<i>Object Studies</i>	89
	<i>Feminist Gaze</i>	98
	<i>Feminism across Boundaries</i>	104
	<i>Rebecca Belmore's New Naming</i>	112
6	Exiles and Diasporas	121
	<i>Symbolic Form in Exile</i>	123
	<i>Eternal Return, Coming Back</i>	125
	<i>Rewriting the Body</i>	127
	<i>Dialogic Trace</i>	128
7	Gendering Decoloniality	133
	<i>Carrie Mae Weems's Diasporic Haunts</i>	134
	<i>Waltzing</i>	135
	<i>Gender's Harms</i>	138
	<i>The Parlor</i>	142
	<i>Interiorities</i>	146
8	Algorithms of Resistance	151
	<i>Shelley Niro's Self-Reflections</i>	153
	<i>Cara Romero's Indigeneity</i>	155
	<i>Matika Wilbur's Map</i>	158
9	Reclaiming History	165
	<i>Coyote and Other Tales</i>	165
	<i>Water Memories</i>	167
	<i>Television</i>	170
	<i>Place/No-place</i>	172
	<i>Indigenous Woman</i>	174

10	Nomads, Reterritorialization	181
	Project 562, <i>Nomadism, Finding Home</i>	182
	<i>Processual Nomadism</i>	183
	<i>Nomads and Women</i>	192
	<i>The Inherency of Reterritorialization and Nomadism</i>	195
	<i>La Pieta</i>	196
11	Conclusion: Photography, Reappearing	209
	<i>Beyond the Sacrificial Economy</i>	214
	Index	223

LIST OF FIGURES

Fig. 2.1	LaToya Ruby Frazier, <i>Landscape of the Body (Epilepsy Test)</i> , 2011, gelatin silver print, 24 × 40" (61 × 101.6 cm). Copyright LaToya Ruby Frazier. Used with permission. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery	40
Fig. 2.2	LaToya Ruby Frazier, <i>John Frazier, LaToya Ruby Frazier and Andrew Carnegie</i> , 2010, gelatin silver print, each 19½ × 43¾" (49.5 × 111.1 cm). Copyright LaToya Ruby Frazier. Used with permission. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery	41
Fig. 2.3	LaToya Ruby Frazier, <i>Aunt Midgie and Grandma Ruby</i> , 2005, gelatin silver print, 15½ × 19¼" (39.4 × 48.9 cm). Copyright LaToya Ruby Frazier. Used with permission. Courtesy of the artist and Gladstone Gallery	42
Fig. 4.1	Shelley Niro, <i>Grand River</i> , from the series <i>Battlefields of My Ancestors</i> , 2015, color inkjet print on archival paper, 17 × 22". Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist	61
Fig. 4.2	Shelley Niro, <i>Ten Pretty Little Indian Houses</i> , from the series <i>Battlefields of My Ancestors</i> , 2015, color inkjet print on archival paper, 17 × 22". Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist	62
Fig. 4.3	Shelley Niro, <i>Sullivan-Clinton Campaign</i> , from the series <i>Battlefields of My Ancestors</i> , 2015, color inkjet print on archival paper, 17 × 22". Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist	64
Fig. 4.4	Shelley Niro, <i>Fergus: Source of the Grand River</i> , from the series <i>Battlefields of My Ancestors</i> , 2015, color inkjet on archival paper, 17 × 22". Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist	66

- Fig. 4.5 Shelley Niro, *Lundy's Lane*, from the series *Battlefields of My Ancestors*, 2015, color inkjet print on archival paper, 17 × 22". Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist 68
- Fig. 4.6 Shelley Niro, *Abandoned Road across from Beaver Dam Site*, from the series *Battlefields of My Ancestors*, 2015, color inkjet print on archival paper, 17 × 22". Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist 69
- Fig. 5.1 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 01, Sara Méndez)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 93
- Fig. 5.2 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 02, Teresa Meschiari)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 94
- Fig. 5.3 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 03, Ledda Barreiro)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 95
- Fig. 5.4 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 04, Isabel Cerruti)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 96
- Fig. 5.5 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 05, Marta Candeloro)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 97
- Fig. 5.6 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 07, Liliana Gardella)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 99
- Fig. 5.7 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 09, Emilce Moler)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 100

- Fig. 5.8 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 10, Liliana Callizo)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 101
- Fig. 5.9 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 11, Marta Candeloro)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 102
- Fig. 5.10 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 12, Maria Luz Pierola)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 103
- Fig. 5.11 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 14, Hebe Cáceres)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 105
- Fig. 5.12 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 15, Ana Maria Careaga)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 106
- Fig. 5.13 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 16, Beatriz Pfeiffer)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 107
- Fig. 5.14 Paula Luttringer, *Untitled (No. 19, Isabel Fernández Blanco)*, from the series *El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls*, Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist 108

Fig. 5.15	Paula Luttringer, <i>Untitled (No. 20, Liliana Gardella)</i> , from the series <i>El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls</i> , Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist	109
Fig. 5.16	Paula Luttringer, <i>Untitled</i> , from the series <i>El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls</i> , Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist	110
Fig. 5.17	Paula Luttringer, <i>Untitled</i> , from the series <i>El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls</i> , Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist	111
Fig. 5.18	Paula Luttringer, <i>Untitled</i> , from the series <i>El Lamento de los Muros/The Wailing of the Walls</i> , Argentina, 2000–2005, inkjet print of a photograph, archival pigment print on Hahnemuhle 308 photo rag, 36 × 36" (91.4 × 91.4 cm). Copyright Paula Luttringer. Courtesy of the artist	111
Fig. 7.1	Carrie Mae Weems, <i>Sorrow's Bed</i> , from the series <i>The Louisiana Project</i> , 2003, gelatin silver print, 20 × 20". Copyright Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York	136
Fig. 7.2	Carrie Mae Weems, <i>A Single's Waltz in Time</i> (triptych), from the series <i>The Louisiana Project</i> , 2003, gelatin silver prints, each 20 × 20". Copyright Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York	139
Fig. 7.3	Carrie Mae Weems, <i>A Single's Waltz in Time</i> (frame 1), from the series <i>The Louisiana Project</i> , 2003, gelatin silver print, 20 × 20". Copyright Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York	140
Fig. 7.4	Carrie Mae Weems, <i>A Single's Waltz in Time</i> (frame 2), from the series <i>The Louisiana Project</i> , 2003, gelatin silver print, 20 × 20". Copyright Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York	142
Fig. 7.5	Carrie Mae Weems, <i>A Single's Waltz in Time</i> (frame 3), from the series <i>The Louisiana Project</i> , 2003, gelatin silver print, 20 × 20". Copyright Carrie Mae Weems. Courtesy of the artist and Jack Shainman Gallery, New York	144

- Fig. 10.1 Shelley Niro, *Trunk*, from the series *La Pietà*, 2007, third image of seven color/black-and-white prints on beaded red cloths, 50 × 40". Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist 197
- Fig. 10.2 Shelley Niro, *Young Man's Chest*, from the series *La Pietà*, 2007, fourth image of seven color/black-and-white prints on beaded red cloths, 40 × 60". Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist 198
- Fig. 10.3 Shelley Niro, *Gothic Landscape*, from the series *La Pietà*, 2007, fifth image of seven color/black-and white-prints on beaded red cloths, 40 × 60". Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist 199
- Fig. 10.4 Shelley Niro, *At the Edge*, from the series *La Pietà*, 2007, sixth image of seven color/black-and-white prints on beaded red cloths, 40 × 60". Collection of the National Museum of the American Indian, Washington, DC. Copyright Shelley Niro. Courtesy of the artist 200



Introduction: Anticolonialist Photography in the Americas

Speaking at the eerily titled “Standing Up for Faith and Freedom Conference” on April 23, 2021, the former United States senator and CNN news analyst Rick Santorum asserted a unified American “we” of European descent, arguing that “*We* birthed a nation from nothing. I mean, there was nothing here. I mean, yes we have Native Americans but candidly there isn’t much Native American culture in American culture” (emphasis added).¹ Santorum’s comments reflect how foundational discourses of settler colonialism, such as *terra nullius* and related myths of coloniality, continue to propagate and circulate even as America moves, uneasily, into the third decade of the twenty-first century. For Santorum and his audience, the argument that “there isn’t much Native American culture in American culture” is not the nonsensical claim it would appear, *prima facie*, to be. For his rhetoric imagines an “America,” a United States of America, that consists solely of “patriots,” a term intended to indicate and encapsulate citizens of the United States who are straight, White, and Christian, and who believe that straight, White Christians are the only inhabitants of the United States with a full right to be citizens, counted as such.² *Patriotism*, here, is a euphemism for claiming the right to erase those who are not White, straight, and Christian. It has nothing to do with ancestral ties to the landmass called America, which ancestrally belongs to Indigenous Americans and to no one else. Instead, Santorum’s comments reflect the code of disappearance that governs coloniality, that

is, the rhetorical and often material efforts to erase or elide not only Indigenous Americans but also people descended from the African diaspora; people of mixed race descended from Indigenous Americans, Europeans, and the African diaspora; Latinx; and people of Asian descent, in the context of American sociality. A code of erasure is at the heart of the project of “coloniality,” as Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, drawing from Aníbal Quijano, develop the term.³ This code of erasure is on full display in Santorum’s egregious suggestion that what we now call the American continent was a blank slate when Europeans arrived on American shores. On the contrary, before contact, North America was fully populated with Indigenous Americans. Hence the work of coloniality has been and continues to be the effort to erase not only the history but also the *idea* of Indigenous Americans’ primary rights to the land and, oftentimes, right to existence as such.

This code of erasure is as old as contact and as new as the dregs of Trump-era rhetoric. It is an ongoing climate of thought that undergirds White supremacist notions of Americanness. Whereas this book is not an in-depth history of the processes, rhetorics, and acts of coloniality’s erasures, it is a space for looking at this specific aspect of coloniality—its images and words that work to ignore, diminish, displace, erase, and *disappear* Indigenous and non-European people—encountering this rhetorical violence through the lens (literal and figurative) of women photographers who contest coloniality’s erasures, who create new images and words that supplant, subvert, and remake the colonialist sociality of this place “America.” This contestation occurs through the photographic image. In the effort to fight, to overturn, centuries-long codes of erasure of Indigenous presence and vitality, the photographic image is a singular tool. It is ubiquitous; photography in the vernacular and commercial is everywhere in our world. And yet, a photographic image can stand as a unique (if, typically, easily replicated) visual mark. More than a trace, photography is the formal space wherein the always vanishing visual world returns. Photography is flexible, mobile, quotidian, and procrustean. It reflects what is there but can also make us see and see anew what exists as opposed to what we believe exists.

Even in the era dominated by CGI (computer-generated imagery) and digitally manipulated images, photography’s testimonial force persists. It confronts us with the force of the visible real, even as it can reflect on this very problematic of what appears to be real and why it so appears. Photography is not a language, argues Roland Barthes, and yet it

influences the language of culture, shaping the oneiric, eidetic spaces from which the cultural imaginary emerges.⁴ The eidetic works at the level of supposition and encodes and shapes a field for decoding supposition. A photographic image engages the memory of earlier images. Hence, the work of the photography of resistance is to register a counterdiscourse.⁵ Counterdiscursive images work against the grain of the deep suppositions that support (often in a negative way) the structure and functioning of a given sociality. The erasure of the oppressed of coloniality functions as a support, an egregious one, to the dominance and destructiveness of White, masculine, capitalist patterns of using the resources of the earth and its people. It is not, of course, that the photographers whose works are studied in this book are unary, or represent unary positions vis-à-vis coloniality. The artists do not all necessarily espouse political arguments made in this book. Rather it is that resistance through visuality subverts the rule of coloniality that insists on the erasure, either partial or complete, of the colonized. The rhetoric of erasure is a visual rhetoric; subverting and overturning it is visual work.

The photographic image is congenitally tied to the embodied form and, by extension, to the earth.⁶ This is its hinge for the work of decolonization. As Frantz Fanon writes, “For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land.”⁷ The process of being cut off from ancestral land, and having access to no other source of sustenance (of becoming *de facto* wards of the invading state), is the undertow image of coloniality’s violence. This effect is central to the work of colonization, this effort to take away Indigenous access to ancestral land, to diminish Indigenous presence on and sovereignty of that land. Hence, the quote from Santorum with which I opened this discussion not only reflects that particular individual’s views but also speaks to a dominant strain in American iconology, a belief that precontact America has no meaning in present-day America, a belief that America has been entirely remade in the image of Europe.

Combating these vicious rhetorics of erasure, the photographs of resistance against disappearance discussed in this book deploy image worlds to show what is still present in America, the force and meaning of Indigenous America, and also the image and voice of those brought to America through colonization’s violations.⁸ Even as the dominant culture turns away, ignore, belies, and falsifies the presence of Indigenous and anticolonialist people and forces in America, these presences not only persist but create America. The public imaginative reach and space of the

photograph is crucial to the activist work of visualizing and voicing presence. Here, photography functions as a kind of liquid theater. Jacques Rancière points out that “theatre is first and foremost the space of visibility of speech, the space of problematic translations of what is said into what is seen.”⁹ Photography, as Barthes reminds us, is cousin to theater, photography connected to theater not only for the reasons that Barthes cites—“Photography is a kind of ancient theater, a *tableau vivant*, a figuration of the made-up and motionless face beneath which we see the dead”—but also for a few more.¹⁰ Photography is theater because of its constant translation into the public sphere, because it exudes from and persists in the public imagination. Photography is a “visibility of speech” and a “space of problematic translations of what is said into what is seen.”¹¹ It is public. The image’s ease of translation, crossing between the mark of light and CGI, between simulacrum screens and physical manifestations in space-time, enters and shapes abiding notions of publicity as such. Even as photography with editing apps can now produce deepfakes, the medium retains an ability to manifest in the public sphere as reality, altering the imaginary realm that becomes the material real in social space.¹² The labor of photographic images that contest coloniality is, then, to enter the broader imagination of what we believe is “America” and to deconstruct the distorting skew of settler colonialism, thus creating in the place of mythic distortion the clarity of visible history.

DECOLONIZING THE PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGINATION

Photography historically stands among the forces of colonization, deploying, expressing, reflecting, and asserting the settler colonialist gaze. The medium has long served as a tool of discursive colonization.¹³ As John Tagg and others make clear, the photographic image has been conscripted by colonialist forces to create propagandistic images that masquerade as verity and to create pedagogic visual texts masked as facts.¹⁴ The history of photography includes an extensive history of White settler colonialists taking photographs of colonized people, Indigenous American, African American, Asian American, and Latinx peoples in images that attempt to signify and enact domination and oppression.¹⁵ And yet, the photographic gaze is never stable but instead is multiple, differential, always shifting, according to who is able to leverage the social and economic power to access the technology and circulate images. As Jae Emerling rightly argues, there is not one photography but multiple photographies.¹⁶ This book, on

photography, resistance, and disappearance, concerns the use of the camera and the photographic image to redress, undo, resist, and overturn entrenched patterns of cultural erasure that were originally inculcated and enacted—in part—by photographic practices and that continue to be fomented and extended by coloniality’s deployment of the photographically based image. And yet, photography also is an apt tool of resistance, of decoloniality, because to take up the camera is to assert a capacity to shift the angle of the always multifarious gaze of the machine of vision. That does not mean, of course, that just because a woman or feminine-identified person operates the camera the image is feminist; and it does not mean that just because a person of Indigenous American, African American, Asian American, or Latinx descent deploys the camera the result is automatically decolonialist. Within the scope of this book the images studied are, I will argue, anticolonialist images. I make no claims, however, regarding the personal politics of the artists.

At once fragmentary and depressingly unary, the problematic of disappearance in coloniality occurs at the depths of, or at the vanishing point of, colonization. The White supremacist cultural dream is suppression and erasure of those not of European descent; and the co-occurring desire of colonization is complete access to land, resources, and labor—for the extraction of goods sets in motion forces that trend toward the expulsion, displacement, oppression, silencing and erasure of Indigenous populations and of all those who are colonized. And yet, this very notion, and eidetic vista, of the disappearance of the non-European, the non-White, is itself a form of discursive colonization. At the outset, then, I want to make clear that this is not a book that argues that people of the African diaspora, Indigenous Americans, Latinx peoples, and Asian Americans exist in a condition of actual erasure or disappearance. On the contrary, the work of this book is to excavate, by paying witness to photographically based works, the false perception from the perspective of coloniality that Indigenous Americans are no longer vital to the identity of Americanness, or that African Americans are less central than Whites to the national narrative, or that Latinx peoples and Asian Americans are fundamentally “other” to the ideation of Americanness. Just as the work of decolonizing the museum space is work enacted through collaboration between descendants of colonized peoples, including descendants of peoples against whom genocide has been enacted, and descendants of settler colonialists, so also decolonizing the photographic canon—part of the goal of a book like this one—is a collaborative process. As a White woman of

predominantly European ancestry, descended from settler colonialists long present in the American Southeast, I see my role in writing this book as that of a witness, a witness to the decolonizing visual work of the photographs around which this work coalesces. It is not my work of writing that is decolonizing; rather I write as a witness to the anticolonialist photographs of Shelley Niro (Mohawk, Bay of Quinte), Cara Romero (Chemehuevi), Rebecca Belmore (Anishinaabe), Matika Wilbur (Swinomish and Tulalip), Carrie Mae Weems, Ana Mendieta, An-My Lê, Paula Luttringer, LaToya Ruby Frazier, and Martine Gutiérrez. The labor of decolonizing the photographic archive is immense. Each of these photographers (and multimedia artists) practices an approach to art that Cara Romero insightfully glosses as “indigenization.”¹⁷ Pressing the envelope of photographic conceptualization and symbolism, these photographs are “medicine” as Edgar Villanueva (Lumbee) and John Bear Allison (Eastern Band Cherokee) deploy the term.¹⁸ They are medicine in that they stage confrontations with histories of ongoing enforced disappearances, both bodily (in the memorialization of the disappeared in Luttringer’s and Belmore’s works) and culturally, in the work of *all* the photographs explored in this book. The symbolic space of what has been suppressed, erased, effaced, in colonialist violence, is excavated in these works.

This book does not suggest any neat contiguity between disparate social and ancestral worlds that suffered under colonization but rather meditates on modes of resistance across groups that share resonance and cumulatively shape discourse. The core of my ethos in writing is to recognize and honor the ideation of Indigeneity in the scope of that culture we now call American. Shawn Wilson (Cree) argues that “an Indigenous research paradigm is made up of Indigenous ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology.”¹⁹ In other words, an indigenizing paradigm is all-encompassing. Likewise, to decolonize the image world of coloniality takes a combination of ontology, epistemology, axiology, and methodology. Hence, reading photographs that express and explore the American problematic of the African diaspora, as well as the cultural memories and lives of Latinx and Asian Americans, must be informed by the intellectual work of indigenization and decolonization. This is not to appropriate Indigenous American intellectual labor for the use of other colonized peoples but rather to acknowledge deeply that the bedrock and foundation of decolonization in the Americas *is* Indigenous American theory, that is, ontology, epistemology, axiology, and consequently methodology. For

this book, ontology means forefronting the lived and historical realities of erasures and effacements that coloniality enacted and continues to enact. Epistemology extends from photographic and counterdiscursive traditions of image making and image circulating. Axiology is of critical importance, insofar as the photographers on whom this book focuses already reflect populations marginalized by coloniality; I want to pause here, then, and linger somewhat on this threadbare euphemism, *marginalized*.

Pushed to the side, the invisible population is yet tacitly included in the idea of the nation-state, pressed to its periphery, occupying the blind spot where coloniality's violence creates the politics of nonbeing, at the periphery. Peripheral vision, the ability to see not what is directly the front, or what is the nation's chosen public face, is also an angled point of view for decolonizing image circulation. The social space of the disappeared of coloniality, those who have historically been erased, is the figural space of the unfigured in this social landscape. This is the topos of the photography of resistance, a space that leverages resistance to erasure. Photography's testimonial capacity is skewed and rewired by photography of resistance. Here, what has been pushed to the periphery is *remembered* (to draw from novelist Toni Morrison's evocative neologism), renegotiated to bring presence back to those effaced by the violent processes of coloniality.²⁰

The term *coloniality* as deployed by Mignolo and Walsh indicates a widely and deeply entrenched economic, social, legislative, and judicial system that creates and sustains dominance for European colonialists, primarily in land spaces that are not Europe.²¹ The logic of settler colonialism is to erase Indigenous peoples, replacing them with colonists. In this sense, genocidal intention and action often, though not always, go hand-in-hand with coloniality.²² Always a facet of North American coloniality is the desire, design, mentality, and instrumentality to substantially replace Indigenous peoples with White settlers. This code of replacement is also, as corollary, a code of erasure, an implicit urge to erase those who are colonized, even as the practice of colonization depends on the suppression, and labor, of these peoples. The double violence of coloniality, then, is the nexus of conceptually translating human beings into either resources to be extracted or impediments to resource extraction.²³ This violence was extraordinarily pronounced in the process of colonization of the Americas and in the United States of America, a nation-state wherein the Jeffersonian ideal of erasing all presence of Indigenous peoples, through assimilation and displacement, was long held as policy, however fragmentary. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia*, Thomas Jefferson presents Indigenous American

culture as moribund by falsely diminishing his record of the numbers of Powhatan and Monacan peoples (the Indigenous tribes of what we now call the state of Virginia) living in the area.²⁴ He advocates that European settler colonialists should intermix with Indigenous Americans until such time as there are no people left with the identity of being Indigenous American, that is, extinction through assimilation. Jefferson's genocidal ideal here may be seen as part of his motivation for the momentous Louisiana Purchase of 1803, which displaced thousands of Indigenous Americans.²⁵ Moreover, the system of boarding schools and the infamous "termination policy" that held sway from the late nineteenth century into the mid twentieth century in the United States of America implemented or attempted to implement Jefferson's goal of making Indigenous Americans "American" by eradicating their identity as Indigenous Americans.

The haunting and genocidal phrase "kill the Indian, save the man" indicated the idea that Indigenous Americans could become fully "American" by being absorbed into Whiteness by adopting European-influenced cultural beliefs and behaviors.²⁶ Sequent policies aimed at erasing the cultural and material presence of Indigenous Americans expressed the distortions of the cultural imagination of coloniality.²⁷ The ways that Indigenous Americans have persevered, maintaining culture and historical memory and continuity despite genocidal colonization, is the larger context for the work of photography of resistance, photography that resists, refuses, lays bare, and ultimately overturns coloniality's goals of erasure.²⁸

Although this book, *Photography and Resistance: Anticolonialist Photography in the Americas*, is not exclusively concerned with the history and art of Indigenous Americans, it traces parallels and overlaps of coloniality's dispossession of non-European peoples. There are obvious differences in ways that coloniality in the Americas has discursively interpreted and profoundly harmed Indigenous Americans, African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latinx peoples; yet, a positional similarity inheres in what Frantz Fanon describes, eloquently, as the enforcement of a "black skin, white masks" mentality, wherein anyone who is non-European is compelled to perform in the mode of the European or face erasure—either bodily erasure, in the form of genocidal death, or social erasure, in the form of enforced identity.²⁹ Glen Sean Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* extends, deepens, and complicates Fanon's argument, making the case that Indigenous people do not gain sovereignty by accepting indoctrination into Whiteness but rather by rejecting it.³⁰ Photography of resistance reembodies the disappeared of coloniality, using the visionary trope of the photographic medium to strip the violence of coloniality's masking.

As a feminist visual tactic, this practice is enacted by women (cis and trans) photographers. As Kendra Greendeer (Ho-Chunk) argues, the work of Indigenous feminism is to regather the broken pieces of our ecological situation in coloniality.³¹ Some might call this philosophy ecofeminism, but Jolene Rickard argues it is what Indigenous women, in America, have always practiced and theorized.³² The ecofeminism of anticoloniality is intrinsic. It is intrinsic to resistance to coloniality that what we call the “environment” or the natural world is given respect and veneration. Photography as technology extends a history of reflecting the natural world.³³

As poet Joy Harjo (Muskogee Creek) writes, “Remember to thank each maker of stitch and layer of pattern, the dyer of color in the immense house of beauty and pain.”³⁴ The photograph is also a made image-object. Although it acts as a kind of transmaterial image, because of the ease with which photographic images can be circulated through digital and internet technologies, the printed photograph—and all the photographs discussed in this book are printed image-objects—stands as a made thing, a noun. The importance of this materiality inheres in the photograph’s capacity to take its place in public social space. The transmaterial spaces of the internet are, of course, discursive public spaces, but the embodied immediacy of encountering photographs in gallery, museum, and above all in public, civic space is crucial for the work of the photography of resistance, for this is the work of reembodying the disappeared in public imagination that is, always, ultimately public space.

THE PHOTOGRAPH AS ACT

Intrinsic to Indigenous ontology is what we might now call “ecopoetics” and “ecofeminism,” but as Jolene Rickard (Tuscarora) contends, ecological sovereignty has always been at the core of Indigenous thinking.³⁵ Ecofeminism is nothing new to Indigenous Americans, and Rickard questions the extent to which the current trend of ecofeminism steals from Indigenous American thought without attributing to Indigenous American women this work of theorization. She rightly asks, what do Indigenous American women gain by joining the banner of ecofeminism when they have always practiced and theorized precisely this worldview and praxis?³⁶ Like Western, White feminism, photography has an uneasy relationship to environmental concerns and stewardship. As with virtually any invention of capitalism, we can safely say that the health of the earth itself would be better if there were no photography, inasmuch as the processes of

analogue photography involve toxins while the fossil fuel energy consumption of computer-based image making and circulation is obscene. And yet, given the larger context in which we live, wherein the possibility of erasing these technologies is nonexistent, to deploy photography for the purposes of indigenization, including expressing ecological concerns, can be argued to strengthen the positionality of ecology.

The act of photography has an always complicated relationship to the natural world. Photographs can accurately render the natural world, as photography's progenitor William Henry Fox Talbot recognized, arguing poetically that photography *allows* nature to write herself (and Niépce similarly argued that photography enables nature to copy herself).³⁷ But the photographic process depends variously on chemistry and technologies that are, in their production and disposal, inarguably damaging to the health of the environment. Digitized photography does not sidestep environmental concerns, inasmuch as it too is often printed, and even when it is not printed but only shared screen to screen it must be remembered that the creation of computers and the massive and vast energy drawn on to allow the circulation of images online are profoundly deleterious to the environment. Photography now translates through CGI, swallowing all other image systems. Its leveling force pushes to the periphery other forms of signification and foments an obsessive repetition pattern wherein there is never an end to the creation and circulation of the photographically based image, as the image does not bind itself to consistent frame or place. This endless photograph becomes a kind of white noise, a kind of erasure, at the periphery of vision. And yet the photograph can also function even now as a witness, showing testimonial of what has been suppressed, pressed down into the invisible. This is the paradox of the photography of resistance. That is, it deploys the tools of discursive colonization by flipping the script and revealing the suppressed ravages of colonization.

Here, the photograph speaks as a witness changing the eye, the lens, the mode of vision. Argues Elizabeth Solomon (Massachusetts at Ponkapoag), honoring Indigenous space emerges from recognizing that wherever you are in America you are in Native space, in a place where Indigenous tribes have "an ancient and inseparable connection with that space."³⁸ The struggle to photograph America returns, always, again and again, to the origins of the United States, or rather to what precedes those origins, the place of Indigenous Americans. A question that this book approaches, then, from the perspective of decoloniality (though I the author am not an Indigenous American), is why photography? What does

photography bring to the deep wound and complex problematic of American presences and absences?

WHAT DISAPPEARS, WHAT PERSISTS

Voice, spoken aloud, lingers in the mind, then sifts by degrees into memory. All day I have been listening to disembodied, faced voices through the online Zoom platform as has become customary during the COVID-19 pandemic. Like these spectral image-words, written words also move, or rather, the eye reading them moves along the page (differences of course between how different written languages arrange spatially on surfaces). The still photographic image, by contrast, *stays*. Even on a screen it stays, if you do not flick to the next image. The larger and more complex an image the more it can be thought of as a text across which the eye has to move to read, the less it is a unified sign, and yet even such images are also legible as a unified *space*; the space of the individual photographic image is unary.³⁹ The composite, gathered sign of an image exists differently in time from the durational quality of language, which must be walked through, as it were, but photographic images also contain expansive duration via access to past, present, and future as symbol. The photograph is sometimes (in some iterations) a meta-image, its presence as image intensified by differential temporality.⁴⁰ In this sense, photography is as far from language as image can go and also is uncannily close to, neighboring, the root of language, the frozen moment where the image becomes meaning. It is in this sense that photography of resistance engages the linguistic apparatus embedded in image. It is here that as activist art photography of resistance engages language as part of its activism. Why is it that photography, rather than other media and other signs, other semiotic marks, coheres with the protest against social, political, and bodily erasure of the oppressed? That is the problematic of activist art that frames and motivates this book, *Photography and Resistance: Anticolonialist Photography in the Americas*. The answers to photography's proximity to activism are embedded in my discussions of each individual set of works explored in this book.

ON THEORY, METHODOLOGY, IDENTITY

How do we write outside of, beyond, that is, write our way out of coloniality's frame? The frame of Western discourse is, without question, historically masculinist and racist. And yet, the frame of coloniality is, for all its