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ABSTRACT**The logics of digitisation: race, cyberspace, and digital settler colonialism**

This paper will investigate how settler colonialism is extended online through the Internet, becoming “digital settler colonialism”, a term I have coined, that then encourages white supremacist violence offline. Digital settler colonialism, I argue, refers to the production, maintenance and use of the Internet to extend settler colonialism and reiterate the power of the white sovereign online. The white cursor of technology, the Internet, becomes a tool used to “eliminate the native”, Indigenous subjects, and in addition, to “exterminate the Other”, such as Black and racialised Muslim subjects, to extend the legacy of the white settler state. Where we understand that settler colonialism both marks the racialised body and colonises land, I argue that the Internet extends this through its digital operations while appearing racially neutral. This will be evidenced through the exploration of independently archived computer mediated material and drawing on disciplines of whiteness, settler colonial and critical race and Internet studies to purport that studies of racism online necessitate a media and race specific approach that is encompassing of the offline structures that maintain racial violence. I direct my attention to systems that can reiterate the settler state – such as the Internet – rather than Internet users, investigating to what extent settler colonialism is built *into* the Internet.

Introduction

I seek to acknowledge the lands on which I research and write on today, the land of the Dharug people of the Eora Nation. Indigenous sovereignty has never been ceded. Australia always was, and always will be, Aboriginal land. My Masters research examined the settler colonial violence embodied in Aotearoa-New Zealand through a case study of the Christchurch Massacre, where an Australian man took the lives of 51 Muslims and injured 49. I examined the racially loaded attack through the focus of the settler state, studying how this instance of Islamophobia was rooted in white settler colonialism, that was then extended online. The current trajectory of my doctoral dissertation seeks to further complicate Australia with another settler state, the United States of America, and its settler colonial violence embodied via the Internet. Therefore, I seek to examine racial violence through a settler colonial lens beginning on the unceded lands on which I conduct my research, Indigenous Australia, and to apply this to other stolen lands, such as the United States of America.

My research question, now cast in a transnational light, has now been informed by a series of developments as well as notable gaps in critical race and digital studies. The first enabling discovery that I have made that will allow me to amplify and situate digital settler colonialism in a largescale analysis is the locating of David Gaertner's (2020) term '*digitālis nullius*, the erasure of Indigenous presence from technological spaces'. In his use of the term, Gaertner (2020) outlines the ways that digital code and racist narratives drive video games that can exude settler colonial violence. The refining of my term digital settler colonialism becomes crucial in this light as there is a current urge to examine digital technologies to 'larger issues of decolonization, including, most importantly, the return of land and the dismantling of white supremacy' (Gaertner 2020). Though my dissertation seeks to consider the use of the Internet as a digital tool to reiterate the settler state rather than focus on how video games can exclude Indigenous people, the term *digitalis nullius* is fruitful for my exploration of race, power, and

the Internet, as it situates my work in an international webbing of scholarship critiquing digital technologies and Indigeneity.

In 2021 I completed a research stint titled “Digital Self-Determination: Towards Autonomy and Agency in the Digital Age” through Digital Asia Hub in collaboration with Berkman Klein Centre, Harvard University, and the Global Network of Internet & Society Centres. The program involved an international cohort of research candidates versed in digital studies, seeking to contribute the further refining of the term “digital self-determination.” The cohort contributed a publicly available Wikipedia page titled Digital Self Determination (2021) that showcased our research findings which drew on a range of intersectional themes to explore control, autonomy, and power of the Internet.

The Wikipedia page outlined both digital colonialism and digital apartheid, however the initiative left room to further explore the concept of settler colonialism online, an idea I prompted in the research stint. During the program we were asked to deliver a range of “artefacts”, akin to weekly assignments and tasks, which spoke to the digital themes we were discussing. We would often discuss them amongst our peers and they would feature as highlights for people external to our cohort who were following the development of the research stint, such as via newsletters or social media posts. Below is a copy of my first submitted artefact to the research stint, where we were asked to electronically submit a concept paper, flyer or series of images that spoke to digital self-determination:



First image: Diop Makhtar, 'Bookable or Bookinizable scientific papers', *Medium*, <https://mkrdiop.medium.com/bookable-or-bookinizable-scientific-papers-1ed2c3108149>, 1 December 2021, Accessed 5 December 2021.

Second image: United States Department of the Interior 1911 advertisement offering Indian Land for Sale, https://www.californiaindianeducation.org/indian_land/for_sale/, Accessed 5 December 2021.

I submitted the artefact to the cohort, juxtaposing two images which speak to place and power in the United States of America and the Internet. This is the intersection of critical race and digital studies that I am concerned with: how do we reconcile speaking about digital self-determination when we do not begin with the fact that our tech history and industries are bound in the racial violence of the settler state? If we are considering the themes of self-determination, a fierce term often used in social justice climates, and in Australian contexts often discussed with reference to our First nations peoples, should we not consider what our digital technologies say about settler colonial relations? The very least I could do to address this ethical and critical concern of mine was to urge that we consider the race relations, or lack thereof,

that the Internet has been birthed on. In entrepreneur like attitudes, we can see the power that images and ideas such as ‘Silicon Valley is a mindset, not a location’ (Makhtar 2021) seeks to bolster. However, where is the settler location of the Silicon Valley located on, and what does this say about digital self-determination? This artefact was submitted to urge our beginning discussions, when considering the Internet, a set of technologies attributed to its founding in the Silicon Valley of the United States of America, to understand how settler colonialism is physically embodied in the formation and maintenance of the Internet, from its inception. For example, much can be expanded on through the work of Christian Sandvig who explores how Native American communities fare ‘Offline by Design’ (2012, p. 172) due to Indian reservations having been chosen as prisons, and now lack the infrastructures for roads, power, and cabling. From this position I will consider the following: how can we investigate the nexus between race, power, and the Internet? How does the Internet bolster digital self-determination, in the face of digital settler colonialism? How do Indigenous, Black and racialised subjects navigate these digital terrains when advocating and demanding their emancipation?¹

Defining Digital Settler Colonialism

Digital settler colonialism, I argue, refers to the production, maintenance and use of the Internet to extend settler colonialism and reiterate the power of the white sovereign online. The white cursor of technology, the Internet, becomes a tool used to eliminate Indigenous subjects and to exterminate the Other, including racialised Muslim subjects, to extend the legacy of the white settler state. Where we understand that settler colonialism both marks the racialised body and colonised land, I argue that the Internet extends this through its digital operations while appearing racially neutral. As ho’omanawanui asserts,

¹ I would like to acknowledge the paper presented by PhD Megan Kelleher in the Digital self-determination research sprint. Megan Keller, a Barada/Baradha and Gabalbara/Kapalbara woman, shared her research in Indigenous knowledge systems and blockchain mapping during one of the sessions of the program.

Settler colonialism relentlessly continues to displace Indigenous people from their lands, misrepresented, appropriated Indigenous identities and cultures in cyberspace are thus a complementary component to settler colonialism in the geophysical space of the “real world” (2013, p. 396).

My understanding of the Internet as an arena for settler colonialism is prompted through Wendy K. Chun’s exploration of race as technology:

Could race be not simply an object of representation and portrayal, of knowledge or truth, but also a technique that one uses, even as one is used by it—a carefully crafted, historically inflected system of tools, mediation, or enframing that builds history and identity?’ (2009, p. 7).

Therefore, by understanding that race can be enacted as technology and that our technologies are inherently racialised, I ask: How does the Internet reiterate the settler state, and what might be these consequences for non-white subjects, online and offline? The Internet must be theorised in this way – as a series of entities that can become another arena to dehumanise, exterminate and eliminate Indigenous, Black and racialised subjects, while acknowledging and qualifying, the co-option of the Internet to resist racial violence by these very subjects. As Michel Foucault writes:

Power relations include two elements: “that ‘the other’ (the one over whom power is exercised) be thoroughly recognized and maintained to the very end as a person who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions may open up (2000, p. 340).

I explore the ferocity that the Internet can pose as it mimics the offline settler relations in both Australia and the United States of America, thus highlighting the structural violence that Indigenous, Black, and racialised peoples must face online. This can be complemented by Nakamura's point that, 'Bodies get tricky in cyberspace; that sense of disembodiment that is both freeing and disorienting creates a profound malaise in the user that stable images of race work to fix in place' (2002, p. 6). I propose that the Internet, from its formation, reiterating its military origins and purposes at ARPANET (Advanced Research Project Agency Network), becomes a place of hostile architecture, both inside through interface and algorithms, and outside, through racialised hardware production and use, that is practically designed to fail racialised subjects. This proposal undergirds my conjuring of the term *digital settler colonialism*, which I will explore through a case study in this paper, as I continue to investigate race, power, and the Internet.

Theories such as 'e-Colonialism' and 'Electronic Colonialism' have addressed how whiteness permeates technologies such as the Internet; however, they have focussed on how 'mass media are leading to a new concept of empire' and investigated the 'impact and control of the mind' (Suja, 2015, p. 1). Petar Jandrić and Ana Kuzmanić coin the term 'digital postcolonialism' as one that seeks to explore 'the relationships between our migration into the digital and "its" science' (2015, p. 36), by problematising digital technologies and postcolonialism. Michael Kwet contributes his theory of digital colonialism in highlighting how 'the United States is reinventing colonialism in the Global South through the domination of digital technology' (2019, p. 1). Karaitiana Taiuru (2020a) has used the term 'digital colonialism' to refer to how government decisions regarding the Internet and data can cause harm in Aotearoa-New Zealand. Uleses Ali Mejias and Nick Couldry (2019) in *The Costs of Connection: How Data Is Colonizing Human Life and Appropriating It for Capitalism*, have discussed the implications

of ‘data colonialism’ to extend new stages of capitalism through social data. I note these terms to highlight that I am cognisant of the disciplinary concerns and contributions of others exploring the nexus between different forms of colonialism, power, and digital technologies. However, I have coined the term digital *settler* colonialism to explore how the Internet extends settler colonialism, cognisant of the differentials between colonialism, postcolonialism and settler colonialism, to analyse how the Internet can become a tool to decide who does and does not belong and extend settler violence online and offline.

Fruitful to my research in this area is Ryan Al-Natour’s ‘Unpacking vulgar internet content on the ‘Aboriginal memes’ pages’, exploring how digital culture exhibits ‘typical colonial racist efforts to dehumanise Indigenous populations on a digital sphere’ (2021, p. 6). As well, Ryan Frazer has detailed how Indigenous Australian Internet users fare harmfully online through social media that can ‘constitute new horizons toward which settler colonial forces of marginalization, disenfranchisement, and elimination can extend and strengthen their power’ (2020, p. 1). Bronwyn Carlson and Tristan Kennedy reiterate this strength, ‘while social media remains perilous, Indigenous people are harnessing online platforms for their own ends, for the reinforcement of selfhood, for identifying and being identified and, as a vehicle for humour and subversion’ (2021, p. 1). These contributions are complementary to my concept of digital settler colonialism; however, I am interested in a broader understanding of the Internet, rather than social media or Google, and how it produces racial violence that reiterates white supremacy and the settler state. The work of academics in Australia such as Bronwyn Carlson and Ryan Frazer, as well as Marisa Elena Duarte in her text *Network Sovereignty: Building the Internet Across Indian Country*, reiterate the importance of centring Indigeneity and settler colonialism in emerging studies of digital identities, tools, and technologies.

Whiteness Inside and Outside of the Internet

I pay attention to the wealth of literature investigating how race, and explicitly settler colonialism, is *physically* embedded in the history, design, and maintenance of the Internet, that I argue, can enable digital settler colonialism. It is crucial to map how the Internet works to reproduce forms of racial violence by acknowledging its physical formation before I examine the racialised interface and use of the Internet. To study how the Internet can exhibit the multiplicities of heterogeneity of the settler state, I acknowledge that the Internet is a series of entities born out of the US military-industrial complex. The historical genealogy of the military complex that birthed the Internet as a form of settler imperial apparatus, therefore, becomes complicated in my analysis of digital settler colonialism. Yasha Levine (2019) in his book *Surveillance Valley* details the history of the Internet by the Pentagon's Advanced Research Project Agency Network (ARPANET) as a communication tool created to be able to withstand a nuclear attack. Here, digital technology cannot be separated from the culture and intentions by which it is developed and used – as a tool to assert white hegemony. Continuing, I argue that the sites of origins of epistemological and physical violence that occur via the Internet and is challenged in other settler colonial societies are situated in a transnational movement, a geopolitical space of the Internet that runs along many racial lines, beginning in a settler colony, the United States, as a military tool that was birthed on colonised Indigenous land.

Marisa Elena Duarte explores how the Internet was fostered and built on Indigenous land, even as she maps how 'Native and Indigenous peoples apply digital technologies toward creating spaces for Native and Indigenous forms of resistance, education and liberation' (2017, p. 130). For example, in 'Visualizing Sovereignty: Cartographic Queries for the Digital Age' Yarimar Bonilla and Max Hantel (2016) detail how digital technologies can be used to depict a

postcolonial Caribbean to digitally retheorize the postcolonial state and imagine sovereignty. In this way, the Internet, as a tool historically used to assert white power, is co-opted by Indigenous communities to challenge settler assumptions of Indigenous peoples being incompatible with the trajectory of technological progress and labelling them as ‘primitive’ (Lanzarotta, 2018, p. 808). This too shows how ‘imaginaries of the internet as a non-Indigenous space’ (Wagner & Fernández-Ardèvol, 2019, p. 83) cannot be separated from its formation. Of course, Indigenous bodies are too exploited in the support of the digital revolution, not just Indigenous land. Lisa Nakamura investigates how Dinè (Navajo) women were exploited by Silicon Valley company Fairchild Semiconductor to demonstrate ‘that digital work – the work of the hand and its digits – could be painlessly transferred from the Indigenous cultural context into the world of technological commercial innovation’ (2014, p. 919). Shortly after the Navajo workers protested for greater economic benefits and fairer treatment for their labour, Fairchild Semiconductor shut their operations and relocated to Asian regions (Donovan 2016). This illustrates how racial capitalism and digital settler colonialism intertwine to violate Indigenous peoples for the benefit of digital technologies, which from its inception and unless co-opted as a resisting tool, has largely excluded Indigenous peoples from the epistemological and entrepreneurial design and benefits of the Internet.

Furthermore, white supremacy as a project that supports digital settler colonialism is central and embodied in the realities of non-Indigenous racialised subjects who assemble the hardware and ontological assembly of the Internet while being excluded from the software and epistemological design of the Internet (Pugliese, 2010, p. 67). Suvendrini Perera (2001) and Coco Fusco (2001) outline the ways in which the formation of the Internet and the digital revolution is carried on the backs of bodies of colour by underpaid migrant women in the

Global South, referred to as the ‘dimensions of this third world digital assembly plants’ (Fusco, 2001, p. 195). Fusco’s details this:

Though these women have virtually no access to the internet, they are a crucial component of the global information circuit. Not only do they assemble much of the digital revolution’s hardware, but their low wages maximize multinational profits and facilitate accelerated consumption of electronic media for the virtual class (2001, p. 195).

I position the following excerpt from Donna Haraway’s text *Domains, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*:

The nimble fingers of Oriental women, the old fascination of little Anglo-Saxon Victorian girls with doll’s houses, women’s enforced attention to the small take on quite new dimensions in this world. There might be a cyborg alive taking account of these new dimensions. Ironically, it might be the unnatural cyborg women making chips in Asia and spiral dancing in Santa Rita jail whose constructed unities will guide effective oppositional strategies (1991, p. 154).

As Lisa Nakamura writes, ‘Haraway’s critical perspective of digital technology’s possibilities and opportunities for intersectional feminism expresses itself in this essay... She wants to remind us forcefully of digital technology’s costs as well as its benefits’ (2014, p. 919). In bid to avoid totalising approaches in theorising the Internet as entirely racially violent or exclusively as a space for racial justice, I ponder in accordance with Haraway’s (1991) text, how do we reconcile the opportunities for racial advocacy possible via the Internet and co-opted by racial communities, knowing, or unknowing, of the depths of racial violence that the Internet can uphold through its history and maintenance?

Becoming e-Raced: A Digital Settler Colonialism case study

While examining what the Internet is, it is integral to examine what it is *not*, using the Internet and information and communication technologies to understand how they too can enact forms of digital settler colonialism. For example, much can be said about the ongoing erasure of indigeneity with the exclusion of Aboriginal Australia and Aotearoa flag and character ‘emojis’, (Verass, 2016) small digital images that are used across mobile and computer devices in the emoji suite, that Indigenous and Māori users had to independently fund and source to digitise their technological representation (Sivasubramanian, 2016; Ward, 2019). I have seen a wealth of academic and journalistic explorations, such as those I use below, but my standpoint is as follows: the exclusion of Indigeneity from digital cultures is digital settler colonialism in action. The result of this is twofold: to reiterate whiteness as the centralised online identity, and to deny Indigeneity, that Indigenous users then must circumnavigate to digitally assemble their own online inclusion. I deploy the work of Bronwyn Carlson and Ryan Frazer in *Indigenous Digital Life: The Practice and Politics of Being Indigenous on Social Media* to offer a case study of how Internet extensions, such as emojis, may be considered digital settler colonialism, that Indigenous Australians have resisted:

From the moment social media was introduced to Australia, Aboriginal people have used different characters and colours to approximate the Aboriginal flag online – such as the emoticon [-o-], by including a sequence of black, yellow and red emojis, or by putting a filter on their profile picture... It wasn’t until as late as 2017 that the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander flags themselves were formally added to Twitter’s emoji library – the release corresponding with the week that hundreds of Aboriginal leaders gathered at Uluru to call for a roadmap to treaty, constitutional recognition, and an Indigenous voice to parliament, in what became known as the Uluru Statement from the Heart. While the two tiny illustrations might

seem to pale in significance to the Statement, they are nonetheless part of the same political programme of claiming Indigenous identity and, ultimately, sovereignty (2021, p. 32).

These additions feature as mobile stickers and add on features, rather than being included in the suite of emojis, showing how Indigenous representation, even when incorporated into ‘features’ of digital technology are further marginalised – an extension of a feature. The original emoji suite only focused on white characters, highlighting how techno culture centres whiteness (Sweeney & Whaley, 2019) and how technological epistemologies imagine the ideal subject as white (De la Peña, 2010, pp. 923-924; Matamoros Fernandez, 2017, p. 9). Yet, while the current emoji suite has been ‘diversified’ by offering a flag for every country and a range of ‘Other’ racialised identities – a Muslim woman wearing a hijab, a range of skin tones, a Sikh man wearing a turban – Indigenous identities remain erased in the visual imagery of information and communication technologies. This use of diversity is problematic as it seeks to include racialised bodies on the superficial surface of visual digital cultures while disregarding Indigenous identities. Lisa Nakamura problematises the hijab and AIM digital technologies, writing:

‘The creation and use of these images have particular relevance to questions of freedom, diversity, and racial equality online considering the use of dataveillance technologies to precisely track those groups—fundamentalist Muslims (but not Christians) and immigrants—who are least likely to be fairly or self-represented in American mainstream visual culture’ (2007, p. 38).

We can deploy the following quote of Angela Davis who problematises the concept of diversity:

I have a hard time accepting diversity as a synonym for justice. Diversity is a corporate strategy. It’s a strategy designed to ensure that the institution functions in the same way

that it functioned before, except now that you now have some Black faces and brown faces.

It's a difference that doesn't make a difference (quoted in Eckert, 2015).

Acknowledging that Indigenous users had to create their own visual and digital representation and that racialised non-Indigenous communities were only included after a white centralised emoji suite, is explained by Nakamura, who problematises the inclusion and enfranchisement of racial communities in digital and visual cultures:

Though Internet use by racial minorities is indeed increasing, this is not in itself reason to be optimistic about the medium's ability to enfranchise minorities in a realm of friction-free digital production and self-expression. In the true spirit of neoliberalism, being permitted to exist is not the same as equal representation. Digital visual capital is a commodity that is not freely given to all; as has always been the case with capital of any kind, it must be negotiated and at times actively seized by those to whom it would otherwise not be given (2007, pp. 206-207).

This evidences how the Internet both includes and excludes, enacting a form of digital settler colonialism that seeks to eliminate Indigeneity while celebrating the diversity of non-Indigenous subjects under the guise of everyday multiculturalism. This heightens the need for a critical race approach to technology and digital studies, otherwise, approaches to rectify whitened technologies and include racialised subjects become 'empty metaphors without specificity, equating decolonization with the need for diversity in the field' (Risam, 2018, p. 79). Nakamura theorises the 'false sense of racial equality – or post racial cybermeritocracy which I would term cosmetic multiculturalism' (2002, p. 21). This term can be applied to theorising the superficial inclusion of racialised subjects through visual technologies and

diverse emojis, however, as a structure, Indigenous, Black and racialised bodies fare negatively online, unless they demand and lead their own decolonising, liberation, and activism.

Speaking Back To Settler Violence via the Internet

Before I end this piece, I want to mark that I am cognisant of the wealth of literature that is present in exploring how digital technologies counteract settler colonialism, online and offline. It is precisely this disciplinary strength in emerging studies of the Internet that I believe, reiterate the importance of considering the Internet as an arena for digital settler colonialism, as it highlights the great efforts to dismantle white supremacy online. I acknowledge that while I understand the Internet, through my exploration of digital settler colonialism, as a series of entities that produce racial violence, I am cognisant of the use of the Internet to frame, discuss and share anti-racist activism, utilising hashtag movements and online activism. I am alert, and supportive, of the powerful use of the Internet to affirm the message of the #BlackLivesMatter movement to highlight the injustice of the United States and its police state in creating brutal conditions and the death of Black bodies (Mundt, Ross & Burnett, 2018; Woods & McVey, 2016). As well, the #NoDAPL movement is a powerful Native American led online and offline movement that protested the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation; #NoDAPL has used the Internet and social media to assert Indigenous sovereignty and land in the settler colony of the United States (Clark & Hinzo, 2019; Deem, 2019; Popham & Vanevery, 2018). Māori Internet users have used the Internet to extend their support to Indigenous communities in the US at the events at Standing Rock (Fremaux, 2019), showing how the Internet can foster Indigenous communities support for one another in their fight for sovereignty. I am mindful of the settler colony I reside in, Australia, where the online movement of #SOSBLAKAUSTRALIA began to bring attention to the forced closure of

Aboriginal Australian communities, working to build online support to champion its anti-settler colonial message (Carlson & Frazer, 2016; Wilson, Carlson & Sciascia, 2017). In ‘Smart Colonialism and Digital Divestment’ Anna Kensicki highlights how ‘Israel’s restrictions on the development of fiber-optic cable technology and other fixed ICT infrastructure’ (2019, p. 13) seeks to enact a form of suppression against Palestinians even as online Palestinian communities continue to enact their resistance against Israeli settler colonialism (Tawil-Souri & Aouragh, 2014; Monshipouri & Prompichai, 2018). There are other powerful cases of online social justice uses of the Internet by other Indigenous groups and non-Indigenous racialised communities (Eschmann, 2020; Temkit, 2019). Indigenous, Black, and non-Indigenous racialised peoples are using the Internet to speak back and assert their revolutionary non-compliance with white settler states and oppressive regimes via a tool, the Internet, in the face of digital settler colonialism. We can deploy the following from Michel Foucault to highlight the resistance of online communities:

[I]f it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight.... It would not be possible for power relations to exist without points of insubordination which, by definition, are means of escape (2000, p. 347).

I am aware and note that activism online is not limited to the co-option of hashtags to raise awareness for social justice and racial justice matters. There is a wealth of uses of the Internet for anti-racism activism that I have not explored, for example, but not limited to: crowd funding (Parhankangas 2019), resource sharing, documenting police and state brutality (Taylor 2016),

trauma counselling (Naslund et al 2020), activist collaborations and organising (Aldana, Bañales & Richards-Schuster 2019) and many other means.

However, there are structural disadvantages to the Internet that may limit the possibilities of online activism and the social justice aims of online communities. Charlton D McIlwan finds that:

websites focusing on racial issues are visited less often and are less visible in search result rankings than sites with different, or broader, focuses... a product of how users themselves find and share information online, a process mediated mostly by search engines and, increasingly, social media platforms (2017).

This is a point that I align with in my own digital research – online activism is structurally limited when enacted via the Internet as the Internet was not designed to stage social justice. The Internet can pose both opportunities for anti-racism activism and efforts, however, also stages an arena for settler colonialism and white violence through the production, maintenance and use of the Internet. It is online users fighting white supremacy that has social justice use and potential, rather than the Internet, which as a tool and historically through its military origins, racialised labour and algorithmic exclusion, has favoured whiteness, in similar ways that the offline settler state has reiterated white supremacy. The tactical use of the Internet is a testament to the drive of Indigenous, Black and racialised peoples to co-opt tools and spaces to assert their non-compliance with settler regimes. The same efforts for social justice cannot be assumed of the Internet, which has been historically antithesis to the fight against settler colonialism. The Internet, if not counteracted by its more positive use, extends digital settler colonialism, its sheer existence supports the settler state, which some of its users counteract. In this way we can see more subtle modes, though prominent, that the Internet can issue a form of digital settler colonialism that can disrupt anti-racist discourse online, while appreciating the

co-option of the Internet by Indigenous, Black and racialised bodies to speak back to settler alienation and white supremacy, as bell hooks (1990, p. 187) writes, to resist ‘ways that oppress, dominate, wound’.²

This leads to my second clarification that, while I appreciate the efforts of communities that commit to online anti-racist activism, I am interested in the structural violence that is embodied and extended through digital settler colonialism. Too often is there a focus on social media and racist Internet users rather than the structure of the Internet and the settler violence it affords, precisely because it was predicated and built on settler violence. Where we can look at the offline settler colonial activism, I am considering the same – both call for the reiteration that the settler state must be held accountable. Employing a powerful line from Instagram activist and artist Vienna Rye (2020), who writes ‘the law will never hold the white settler state accountable because it would have to destroy itself’, this line is applicable to studying the settler violence that the Internet upholds, as the settler colonial and racial violence of the Internet is cast away from consideration in bid to quickly blame white supremacist actors, rather than white supremacist structures. This is integral to note as I am not interested in studying white supremacist communities solely per se, rather, my focus is on how the Internet, as a structure, can extend, and mimics, the settler ideologies of the white settler state. Therefore, while the Internet does pose opportunities for Indigenous, Black and non-Indigenous racialised communities to resist settler colonialism online (Harvey, 2019; Lumby, 2010; Petray, 2011; Wilson, Carlson, & Sciascia, 2017), I am concerned with studying structures that we can then

² During the global pandemic of COVID-19 many activists turned to online video conferences for activist organising and learning. However, issues have arisen regarding censorship and hijacking from white supremacist groups. Zoom, Facebook and YouTube cancelled webinars that featured Palestinian activist Leila Khaled (Osman 2020). As well, COVID-19 came with the advent of ‘Zoombombing’, where white supremacists and ‘Internet trolls’ hijack conferences and meetings, often anti-Semitic, Islamophobic and racist in nature, and disturb, speak over organisers and appear nude via webcam (Ali 2021).

consider interrogating, decolonising and problematising, as ku‘ualoha ho‘omanawanui (2013, p. 396) asserts, fruitful to my concept of digital settler colonialism:

In more modern times, settler colonialism has expanded its reach into cyberspace, a relatively uncharted *terra nullius*. Born from within the structure of settler colonialism and its dominant, globalized culture, the Internet is open to all, Indigenous peoples included. Yet from its inception, it is still dominated by settler colonials in myriad ways, including the appropriation of Indigenous people and cultures

Therefore, I have sought to identify how the Internet continues the legacies of the white settler state that can eliminate Indigenous people, target Black communities, and allows racialised subjects to be violated online. My findings and webblings of various theoretical contributions identify that digital settler colonialism is allowed via the Internet, extending the racial violence that the offline settler state exhibits onto Indigenous, Black and racialised peoples. I would be interested to read explorations that consider this struggle between colonising tool and colonised – how can the master’s tools, where we consider the Internet as birthed from and on the settler state of the United States of America, dismantle the master’s house, where we can see it supports the same ideologies of white supremacy and settler colonialism, both in hardware and interface?

Conclusion

The Internet is an arena that extends settler colonialism and enacts white supremacist violence online and offline. Rather than focussing on individual Internet users, such as white supremacists online, as has been examined thoroughly, I am concerned with the broader structures of settler colonialism and how they suture settler colonial violence with racialised

subjects, both in the racial assemblages of the founding of the Internet as well as through the ongoing practices of digital settler colonialism that perpetuate Indigenous exclusion and reiterate white supremacy. I urge further investigations that interrogate the complex interplay between settler colonialism, digital technologies, and power, to examine how cyberspace, digital cultures and the Internet can enact a form of digital settler colonialism, and that where we see Indigenous and racial violence online, consider that this is a practice of resisting digital settler colonialism. Where Lewis Mumford (1967, p. 283) has argued that technology is a ‘way of reaching heaven’, we must ponder, at what cost to Indigenous, Black and racialised bodies is the Internet a digital dreamland?

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