All’s Fair Web Application: Analytic Short Essay

The All's Fair web-based application exists to satirically critique settler colonialism and the colonial gaze. A great amount of inspiration for this project came from Craig Santos Perez' *From Unincorporated Territory [Lukao]*. Perez' work artfully presents the stories of Chamorro people affected by America's colonization of Guam and uplifts those who work towards decolonization, often using satire and humor to make his points. All's Fair aims to similarly expose America's abuse through framing colonial structures within the context of a dating app and to highlight the stories of and decolonial work being done within U.S. unincorporated territories.

Though many class concepts are incorporated into this project, the most integral are the colonial gaze and settler entitlement.

* The colonial gaze is defined as "the way in which the colonial agenda seeks to maintain and legitimate power by determining colonial realities, including the dehumanization of colonial subjects and the perpetual separation of Us (colonizers, civilized) and Other (colonized, savage)," according to IGI Global.
* Settler entitlement is the feeling of justification which empowers and rationalizes settlers stealing property or culture that isn't rightfully theirs. This entitlement is often rooted in religious belief and/or an unfounded sense of self-importance due to innate qualities such as race, sexuality, and gender.

The structure of the All's Fair application embodies the colonial gaze, which "distributes knowledge and power to the subject who looks, while denying or minimizing access to power for its object, the one looked at," according to John Rieder (pg. 7). The All's Fair homepage suggests that only colonizers are granted access to the application, while territory profiles are created and controlled by “theCreator”, the faceless app developer who represents the Western concept of God. Thus, the entire process of colonization is rooted in classism and disregards any indigenous autonomy or sovereignty. In the app, selected territories are presented in a static list- a play on the typical interactive messaging capabilities of dating apps. The relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is abusive, controlling, destructive of identity, and inherently toxic in concept; in reality, it is genocidal.

The name of the application questions a rationalization often attributed to colonization, referencing the phrase "all's fair in love and war." War and colonialism cannot be separated from one another. Colonization is violent and destructive in assimilating cultures into a larger, homogenous entity. As Perez artfully states in several connected phrases spanning the length of his book, "because [A]merica... can't demilitarize... its imagination... people around the world... are dying" (pg. 10, 26, 42, 58, 74). America's colonial and militant mindset has been genocidal since the nation's conception. Many settler Americans tend to distance themselves from colonial destruction by engaging with the idea that colonization is an unavoidable and natural part of life. This move to innocence refuses to acknowledge better ways of governing peoples or condemn the actions of colonial powers.

Settler entitlement is a contributing factor of the colonial gaze. Throughout history, concepts such as manifest destiny have emboldened settler entitlement and allowed colonizers to attribute their actions to following divine or natural orders. Further claims have been made to justify colonial genocide, from "saving the savages" to "liberating the oppressed", all to paint the colonizer as a righteous savior. In the case of Guam's colonization, America overcame Japanese control and proclaimed itself a liberator to absolve the abuse and violence it caused and continues to cause. Perez raises this point by questioning, "is it true that we are liberated," to conclude his poem about Liberation Day (pg. 44). America, along with all other colonizers, has long felt entitled to exploiting and stealing from indigenous peoples with weak excuses that only expose an inability to acknowledge anyone different as human.

Ultimately, the most important aspect of All's Fair is the "Their Futures" page. This page is entirely different from the remainder of the app, providing the stories and voices left out of the colonial gaze narrative. Though the style and tone of this page opposes that of every other part of the project, this is the app's soul. Within these stories are hope and a "vision for a present" that is decolonized for native people, by native people (Simpson, pg. 10). This page is a platform for indigenous decolonial futures to be seen.

Works Cited

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