



## INTRODUCTION

I...

I am going to paint a picture that is very dark.

Then, we'll add some light around the edges.

A soft glimmer.

In the end,

*if* you are with me,

when all is done and the picture is complete,

there is no doubt at all that we will have had an illuminatory academic experience.

*If* by the end the reader feels unsatisfied, they are encouraged to contact the thesis provider at <http://autonomousproperties.org/>.

Although, if the reader is contacting the author with complaints regarding this thesis, then they must be affiliated with Loyola University New Orleans, the institution which requires the production of this document as a condition of the author's honorific graduation.

Yes, it's true.

The Loyola University New Orleans Honors Program is the best football team around, this author is their rookie star quarterback, and the team needs a hail mary pass to get them to the Superdome. Drafted straight out of high school, the author signed a \$250,000 contract to the team with only a few stipulations: a clean nose and high marks. The trophy? An enhanced team brand and competitive appeal.

*Loyola University New Orleans: A team rooted in the catholic tradition...  
but also "chill".*

The ball flies, . . . and the parents go *wild!*

Yes, it's true.

The Ignatians have made it to the championship match, and now they're counting on that quarter-million dollar return on their investment, seen here in the form of a paper football sailing down the cavernous field of entry-level academia. It soars even further... further...

until it becomes indistinguishable among the smallest echoes of the Monroe Library thesis section...

and caught! Safe! This lost youngster has been saved! The game won! Mission complete! The boy is going to college!

Not too dark  
a picture after all...

It's true!

The only reason this author stands before you in this condition today is because of the generosity of the Jesuits. Whereas the state schools were among the highest bidders in the university draft, the polishing of their admittance statistics was thwarted by a particular Catholic brotherhood's vested interest in the youth's resounding moral potential.

Well, over a decade of education has somehow passed. And as a thesis appears to be a culminating endeavor in this regard, it is with meager curiosity that this author begins to write. This author knows that as the final graduation is approaching, the whole world is waiting with bated breath, yearning for the shocking tell-all that is bound to go off like a bombshell when it's dropped on the honors thesis bookshelf. *What has the boy learned?* What has the boy learned! We all wonder. The "real world" is very curious to meet you, and your luxurious membership is soon expiring. The sidelines whisper, "won't you renew your subscription?"

### THE PICTURE

By now the picture is bleak. Think grey. Devoid of color. This new decade's optimism lasted a mere three days, and any residue was neatly squared away by the end of January. At the time of this writing Donald Trump, is in the process of impeachment-- a political trial that will likely result in his full acquittal. *Climate change* has escalated to become the *climate crisis*. Human rights abuses abound domestically and internationally while the magnificently large global wealth disparity is only increasing. And so it appears that the anthropocene is upon us. It is only natural that one feels the strong urge to run, yet this is the mere background. There is no place to run to, you see, because the effect is total. The greyness reaches every corner of the canvas, and the only viable direction is further into the foreground.

Here we find another important color for our palette: red. Unprecedented fires ravage the Amazon at the hands of authoritarian president Jair Bolsonaro. Devastating fires

sweep Australia as the climate crisis' effects become increasingly difficult to ignore. A firefighter in California once told me that the state is perpetually burning. These spots of red in our foreground are deep and large, and they trail off into large swaths of the greyest grey. This grey will in time lead to more red, and thus even more grey, and so on. This is what's known as the "greyhouse effect", and scientists have been aware of it for decades. In not too long it seems that there will be no need for a painter in this process, but we artists must press on. As we wash the red from our brush I propose that we draw inspiration our spacious skies and add a little more grey.

Grey here, grey there, grey children put into grey prisons at the grey border, grey immigrants being arrested and trafficked by grey police. Grey walls being built through the grey desert, grey wars are raging in grey and distant countries while exciting new grey wars linger on the horizon. Grey people buy grey products and watch grey advertisements; they sink into grey pillows, absorbed in a comfort free from the grey horrors. It's fun to paint.

In grey: activists and land protectors in Mexico, Central, and South America are assassinated with impunity; priests around the world are molesting children; Israeli occupation pushes Palestinians further into statelessness; ceaseless war in Syria generates hundreds of thousands of refugees; minority populations globally are stripped of their rights; *trillions* of dollars are spent on an unwinnable war in Afghanistan; the doomsday clock nears midnight as nuclear tensions escalate once more; and how many fingers has anyone here lifted?

But this is just what we're able to gather from our grey headlines. Surely we can dig deeper than this! As artists, we must draw inspiration from our own experiences and seek deeper, more personal shades of grey expression. And, *suddenly*, in the flash of a single moment, we are stricken by the fact that everyone will die. Every being that we will ever love, has ever been loved, will cease to exist. Some sooner, some later. And there is no escape from this, there is only the grieving process.

What's more, youth nihilism is on the incline.

The children just don't know where to turn in times like these... all the options appear as either blatantly evil or boldly stupid. Quite... unappealing. So let us conclude by mixing in some "Can You Really Blame Them? Grey" here and there, and voila! Our work is done.

Now, of course, making art with your friends is very fun and all, but the *process* can be just a little taxing sometimes. Painting is hard work, so it's best to take regular breaks and step outside for some fresh air. In New Orleans in early February the weather outside is pleasantly warm yet brisk. The winds today are blowing vigorously, but the sun dissipates the darker clouds.

### *THE MOTION PICTURE*

The experience of the outside world is a revelation. We step out from our comfortable shotgun and all the senses are engaged at once. The painting, static in our home studio, seems to have little to do with the world in which we find ourselves. The clouds are moving, the grass is moving, the trees are moving, and one can't escape the feeling that these things have been moving for a very long time. And, in fact, it *is* time! For the sun is also moving...

EXT. YELLOWSTONE NATL. PARK - DAY

A pristine landscape is dotted only by a single CAR slowly winding up the hilly park road, gradually drawing nearer. The LAUGHTER of three raucous HIKERS is audible in the distance. The loud hikers emerge into an elevated sunlit clearing where brilliant PURPLE FLOWERS are in full bloom. They are all taken aback at the sight. One of the three stoops to closely inspect the flowers. She has long, curly, PURPLE hair and a GERMAN accent. She wears a PURSE.

GUILI:

Oh, yes! This is very nice! It is so lovely, this view!

A second hiker pulls out a cheap NOTEBOOK and kneels beside a different flower. He is tall and skinny with shorter BROWN hair under a MULTICOLOR beanie. He carries a SACHEL and a large METAL WATER BOTTLE. He is American.

GUILI (CONT.):

(sarcastically) Are you going to now write something profound?

FLACO:

Well, I was. (laughs) Of course, everything I write is very profound.

The third hiker stands a few feet ahead of the others, gazing out into the rugged landscape. He has long, curly, DARK hair, pulled back in a WHITE BANDANA. He is also tall and wears a BACKPACK with a canister of BEAR SPRAY attached to the side and a FRISBEE sticking out. He is also American. He notices that the park's hotel and visitor's center are now completely out of sight.

SLIM:

(breathes deeply) *Finally*. I can't believe that there's a whole-ass five-star hotel in the middle of Yellowstone! Who the hell comes here to stay in a hotel?

FLACO:

I know... I really was not expecting that.

GUILI:

Well, what is the big problem? It probably brings more money for the park and that is good.

SLIM:

The problem is that it goes against the whole idea of it! This is supposed to be wilderness, and if you come out here you should be ready to deal with that.

GUILI:

Well not everybody can do that. Plus,  
the extra money means that they can  
take care of the park better. You  
shouldn't need some fucking bear spray  
to have fun here!

FLACO:

Either way, it's a shame that the park  
should have to do that in order to get  
more money. You'd think places like  
this would be more of a priority.  
(pause) Hey, can you pass me that bear  
spray? I have a mosquito on my leg.

They all laugh. GUILI and FLACO get ready to resume walking.  
They continue a little ways through the forest until the trail  
begins to curve along a treeless ridge. SLIM is the first to see  
that the path has curved back towards the road, but at a higher  
elevation. The CAR that was once in the distance is now coming  
around the same bend about thirty feet from them.

SLIM:

Jesus Christ.

GUILI:

What?

SLIM:

Look.

He points out to the road as the other two approach. They all  
see the SHINY CAR slowly coming around the turn beneath them.  
The DRIVER is looking intently out the window while the  
PASSENGER points his camera in every direction.

FLACO:

(mockingly) Look, honey! There are some  
wild humans! They look so proud!

SLIM:

Look, honey! That one's taking a shit!  
Now drive slow, babe, we don't want to  
scare them!

GUILI:

(smiling) Ah, yes. And that one there  
is now rolling a cigarette.

GUILI pulls the TOBACCO from her bag and begins to roll. The  
other two exchange a glance.

SLIM:

Are you starting to feel it now, bub?

CU, FLACO'S dilated pupils. We can see the landscape in the  
reflection of his eyes.

FLACO:

Oh yes.

CUT TO:

EXT. GEOTHERMAL AREA - YELLOWSTONE NATL. PARK - DAY

The three hikers emerge from the forest. They are confronted  
with a WILD expanse of land. The topography alone...  
it's...

GUILI:

(gasps)

*THE WHITE ELEPHANT BACK TERRACE\*!*

*IT OOZES SULFUR AND VOLCANIC STEAM!*



*THE BOYS, IN A FRENZIED PARANOIA, LOST AND CONFUSED IN  
THE WILDERNESS, ARE SWALLOWED WHOLE!*

\*that's this tasty mama right here.



CUT TO:

INT. SMALL ROOM WITH DESK AND GUITAR - NIGHT

THE AUTHOR sits alone. That's right. (pause) It's me. It's ME me. (longer pause) And you're YOU you. (last pause) And we're starting to get a little invested in this whole thesis thing now, aren't we? I mean, we're already going on ten pages and we haven't even made it to all the stuff on colonialism and rock music and psychedelic world peace... Just remember: it is okay to stop and take a breather. THE AUTHOR stands up and begins to stretch. He's worried that he's bitten off more than he can chew. He had begun with such high hopes, but alas! There he

bends, reaching hopelessly down to his toes. That's the show, folks. That's all. Go home. Get some sleep. It's getting late. THE AUTHOR sinks deeper to the floor, his head going swoosh with sleepythoughts.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE ELEPHANT BACK TERRACE - DAY - MONTAGE

- A FRISBEE flies through the air, momentarily blocking out the sun.
- A LIGHTER flicks on and lights a hand-rolled cigarette.
- FEET skid in the dirt and quickly pivot direction.
- SMOKE trails off of the cigarette, ASH falls to the ground.
- A CATCH, a CATCH, a DROP, a CATCH...
- A FIELD RECORDER sits in the foreground at the edge of a geothermal cave, capturing the PRIMORDIAL GURGLING. The energetic HIKERS are slightly out of focus in the background. Slowly, the sounds begin to change. We hear sticks banging against metal. As we ZOOM into the microphone, the sounds get louder.

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE ELEPHANT BACK TERRACE - EVENING

The three hikers sit on different rocks next to the hot spring. FLACO is drumming against the metal water bottle and the rock. SLIM holds a fine sketchbook, and he slowly guides a pastel against the paper. GUILI sits smoking a cigarette, looking actively at her surroundings. She turns to stare at the vast landscape. Eventually they all turn to stare.

CUT TO:

INT. SMALL ROOM WITH DESK AND GUITAR - NIGHT

THE AUTHOR again sits alone. He fingers slowly through a faded notebook. Once more, *the problem* has presented itself. *The*

*problem!* That old friend, that trusty nemesis... it so often shrinks into invisibility when it feels unthreatened. Hidden, unthought. But once the tone begins to shift, when the language begins to pull towards something... greater... THAT is when *the problem* lurches forward with a colossal weight. It becomes apparent that no earthly alchemy of words can force *the problem* to retreat; it simply grows more convoluted.

THE AUTHOR sighs his usual defeat. He continues turning the pages of the notebook until he has nearly reached the end. He stops, for there is nothing written on this page. Pressed between the sheets of paper are a handful of flowers of the most brilliant purple. He smiles. *The solution.*

CUT TO:

EXT. WHITE ELEPHANT BACK TERRACE - EVENING

CU, a red pastel slowly connects with sketch paper. It traces a fluid, abstract figure.

SLIM (V.O.):

Cattle... who would ever come to *this place* and think to themselves, "This is a perfect place to raise cattle!"? I'll tell you who. It's those same motherfuckers who rode out here on the trains stopping to get out and shoot the buffalo. Not for food, not for trade, not for any goddamn reason other than pure fucking sadistic destruction. And they almost went extinct! Herds the size of New Jersey used to roam the continent, and they almost went fucking extinct!

(pause, the drawing continues)

And look at New York. Manhattan Island  
is one big piece of asphalt and  
concrete now... I mean, *people used to*  
*live there.*

GUILI (V.O.):  
But people *do* live there.

SLIM (V.O.):  
Yeah, but that's not it. People lived  
on that island for *thousands of years.*

(pause, they are engaging..., the work of art is being realized... )

SLIM (V.O.):  
*And, not that long ago, people lived*  
*here.*

(time freezes, the gravity of the situation slows the artist's  
hand, everything rushes to a perfect halt, the cosmos faintly  
shudders, and the silence is penetrating. eons pass. FLACO  
produces the notebook and connects the pen.)

(at the top of the page, the word grows. as the marble crumbles  
away to slowly reveal the sculpture hidden inside, the form  
emerges. that this is no act of original genius is clear, it is  
only an echo of the raw, obvious, immense, and glaring  
sensation.)

OKAY, SO THIS SCENE ENDS A LITTLE BIT DIFFERENTLY:

(the experience. it resists language. accessible, but  
incommunicable. how can one build a house to shelter the wind?  
it's futile.)

IT DOESN'T REALLY "END", IT JUST,

(but some words are bigger than others. some words have sharper edges, or sturdier foundations. FLACO picks the one. the word appears:)

AS THE SUN SETS,

and the dark begins to grow, it is with great reluctance that our people, our characters, move on with their story, out of the wilderness park, on with the dialogue, back to the car, through time, and... *just in it!*

TREY, the last member of the quartet (plot twist!), healthy and safe, is waiting for them in the car at the designated, agreed upon time.

SLIM, GUILI, and FLACO respectfully, reluctantly, and casually, head back to the rendezvous. They knew he'd be alright. He had, as expected, entertained himself sufficiently while his friends (some admittedly closer than others), took the day to participate in activities in which he had no interest.

As they gather their belongings and retrace their steps, away from the spring, back to the trail, through the woods, and down to the visitor's center, they only stop once. One of the team pauses when they reach the wildflower clearing. He stoops down and claims a few neat petals to press inside his notebook. He'd like so much to stay, but they must begin the work of searching for a place to sleep. The sun is rapidly disappearing.

VERY GRADUALLY,

( L a n d )

FADES OUT.

*THE BOOK / THE FLOWER*

The eye travels, the eye travels, the eye travels, the eye travels, the eye travels, the eye travels across the page. The steady motion is what makes reading possible. The eye had been still for many years; the book could not be read. Understand, most people simply don't have the time to read, much less the opportunity. Not every luxury can be afforded. Most things *inside* tend to favor the still eye: early education, high school education, college education, employment, prison, vacation, savings, loans, mortgages, suburbs, television, retirement. A good book club is hard to come by.

But on a trip across the United States, the eye can't help but move. Book club meets every day, always with a new page to discuss. One day it's Yellowstone, the next it's Wyoming, Montana, Oregon, Washington, California, Arizona, Utah, the eye keeps moving, we are confronted with a story of spectacular breadth. Continuous from word to word, night to night, city to city, the book continues to unfold its narrative. Pages and pages go by, Colorado, Kansas, Missouri, the chapters begin to follow the Mississippi, the mountains have turned to plains, the plains have turned to marsh, and the marsh turns into Lake Pontchartrain. Arkansas, Tennessee, Mississippi, Louisiana, New Orleans. Book club has concluded its regular meetings. School is now in session.

But a curiosity lingers. And an eye in motion tends to stay in motion. Questions bubble in the subconscious. The whole country's landscape has a certain incongruence to it. Some code, like a recurring theme, is clearly embedded in the subtext. The *supertext*, rather, for there is some nagging quality about the layer of civilization that sits atop the land, some quality that can be felt. With the eyes. Some discrepancy, some form of industrial malaise permeates this culture. *An eye in motion tends to stay in motion.*

Inertia.

And all this is what's  
bubbling over in the dark cauldron behind the reader's whiplashed eyes, suffering from a sudden book withdrawal and an uncomfortable ocular jolt.

This is when our reader, wandering, sniffing, rummaging through the mundane routine, just passing through the library, spots something that might ease this transition. On a whim, the reader picks an item from the display and heads for the checkout counter. Hopefully it will add an

element of depth to this ever broadening story. At the very least it will keep the eyes moving. The book.

A Little Matter of Genocide: Holocaust and Denial in the Americas 1492 to the Present is the title, and Ward Churchill is the author. The book presents an unflinching historical survey of the colonization of the Americas over the last five hundred years. It deconstructs the cultural mythology that is passed as official truth in the United States, and it asserts an ethical and legal consistency concerning the definition and punishment of the crime of genocide. In so doing, Churchill demonstrates how the United States government (and its early colonial predecessors) has engaged in sustained acts of genocide against indigenous populations dating back to the days of Christopher Columbus.

Although it serves as the genesis of the American origin mythology, the landing of Christopher Columbus in the Americas was, in reality, a catastrophic event. His return voyage to the Carribean in 1493 and subsequent appointment as “viceroy and governor” of Hispaniola initiated the process of genocide that would eventually spread to the entirety of the Americas. Under Columbus’ rule, the native Taino population was reduced from as many as eight million to as few as one hundred thousand by the year 1500 when he was removed from office. Columbus’ lasting policies of slavery, torture, and murder all but annihilated the indigenous population. The Spanish exported diseases to which the local populations had no immunity. Wave after wave of devastating outbreaks crippled these societies. The surviving Taino people were dispossessed of their agricultural base, forced into the *encomienda* forced labor system, and made to provide their rulers with a regular offering of gold, or else suffer bodily mutilation. The brutality of colonial rule in the Carribean basin reduced the total indigenous population in the region from upwards of fifteen million to essentially zero by 1542, and Columbus’ role was instrumental in this process. Yet, every year in October the United States celebrates a holiday in his honor. The Spanish colonial process, proceeding from the Columbian enterprise, in no way diverged from this precedent of indigenous extermination, and this holds true of the other European powers who were then seeking to extend their imperial influence.

While the English struggled to gain a foothold in North America, the Spanish were venturing ever deeper into the continent. They established a

great number of missions espousing the salvation of indigenous souls, but they amounted to little more than evangelical death mills. The native population was treated as an endless and expendable source of slave labor, the prevailing attitude of the Spanish colonizers being that it was more profitable to replace the indigenous slaves than it was to properly feed them. By the time the English established the Jamestown colony in 1607, these ruthless systems were only increasing in intensity.

The Jamestown English expedition came to be headed by professional soldier Captain John Smith, and relations were violent almost immediately. Disputes between the English and the Tsenacommacah escalated, culminating in an overtly *exterminatory* English campaign along the James River. Native villages were burned, crops were destroyed, and populations were massacred. Attritional warfare, designed to abolish the indigenous economic means of survival, proved characteristic of the English strategy. The campaign continued against the Tsenacommacah until the entire population, including noncombatants, was effectively obliterated. The killing only increased as the English became increasingly numerous and well-fortified. The extermination campaigns began to focus on the other indigenous groups in Virginia, as well as in Maryland, and they were just as successful. Any surviving noncombatants that weren't killed were sold into slavery. In New England, it was not until the native populations were decimated by a plague, possibly intentionally introduced to the area by John Smith, that a permanent colony was to be established. The following years saw more devastating epidemics and diplomatic sleight-of-hand as the English gradually gained the footing necessary to launch the kind of total war evinced by their countrymen in the colonies to the south. The "Pequot War" was the first of these conflicts, but it was less of a war than it was a series of massacres. In the end, the "enemy" was declared to be extinct. "King Philip's War" saw much of the same, this time the Wampanoag and Narragansett peoples were the principal victims, as well as the Nausets and Nipmucks. Once more, the conflict ended with the complete destruction of the indigenous communities involved with any survivors being sold into slavery. The "Indian Wars" would proceed in much the same manner with the European powers exploiting various indigenous diplomatic alliances in an attempt to both strengthen their colonial positions, as well as pit the native communities against one another. Then, near the turn of the eighteenth century, in a continuation of the effort to depopulate the claimed colonial boundaries of its native



inhabitants, the colonies began to pass scalping laws. These measures institutionalized a system whereby the colonial governments would pay its constituents a bounty for native scalps, and the rewards were significant. A Massachusetts Englishman in 1704 could receive £100 for the scalp of an adult man, £40 for a woman, and £20 for a child. Not only did this legislation create a lucrative profession out of the killing and mutilation of American Indians, but it also formally extended the task of genocide to any colonial citizen wishing to try their hand. By 1717, every New England colony had a scalp bounty in place. The practice would continue well into the nineteenth century in the frontier territories. Indigenous societies, explicitly faced with the prospect of extinction, were therefore compelled to align with whichever power seemed the lesser of two evils in the subsequent decades. The French made heavy use of indigenous alliances in their conflicts with the English, but intermittent pauses in these wars only produced more targeted extermination campaigns. The Seven Years' War marked the last of these Anglo-French conflicts, won only by the English when they were able to secure native alliances. These alliances were transitory, however, and once the French were defeated the English army turned once more on the native populations, including their Cherokee allies. Towns were burned, crops destroyed, and in the case of the Ottawas, Potawatomes, Wyandots, and Lenni Lenápes, the populations were purposefully infected with smallpox. But the continuous warfare put a strain on the English economy, so in an effort to restrict further westward colonial settlement (and therefore costly warfare) King George III issued the Proclamation of 1763 prohibiting expansion beyond the Appalachian Mountains. The colonists, already speculating the restricted native land, were angered by the decree.

When the revolutionary war broke out, the Crown allied with various indigenous nations against the land-hungry colonists. While indigenous peoples sought to remove illegal settlers from their lands, the colonists mounted large-scale campaigns to destroy these societies altogether. George Washington ordered scorched-earth invasions into Haudenosaunee territory that leveled towns, destroyed crops, and massacred non-combatants (in keeping with the colonial pattern). The same brutal displays were practiced against the Cherokees as well, until they were made to concede about a third of their remaining territory. The Muscogee and Shawnee peoples also found themselves subject to this virulent brand of

violence during the revolutionary period, and each group suffered extensive losses.

After the war, the United States (uninhibited by the British imperial authority) began its creeping expansion ever-westward. The first stage in the new government's policy was formulated by George Washington. Wary of the effects of outright war on the new state, Washington put forward a plan which sought to minimize military expense, but ensure native land appropriation by allocating plots on the frontier to the veterans of the war. The veterans were thus appeased, and the speculated land was seeded with colonists experienced with conflict. Washington reasoned that the soldiers might awe the native groups, and if not, that they would make an effective militia should conflict arise. Washington's larger plan, though, was founded in a reliance on bad faith diplomacy between the United States and native groups. The policy hinged on an effort to acquire as much strategic land as possible through treaty negotiations. Native groups were dealt with on an individual basis and were promised a halt to further encroachments in exchange for the cessation of certain lands. This practice served to give the United States' conquest the veneer of legality while the government's promises to natives were unilaterally ignored. Thus, in the last decades of the eighteenth century, Americans were presenting indigenous nations with the choice to either consent to the appropriation of their homelands, or else endure armed conflict. Groups like the Haudenosaunee, who had been suffering colonial attrition for two centuries, and who had been defrauded by the United States government, were in no position to fight. But others such as the Shawnees and Miamis still had the means to resist. These groups had limited success with armed resistance, to the point where the United States sought "peace" negotiations. When presented with the offer to buy their land base, the Shawnee refused to cede their territory. They instead proposed that the government use the funds to compensate illegal settlers for their removal to other lands. The next year, in 1794, Washington put together an army of 4000 men to put down the resistance. Meanwhile, the Shawnee native coalition, led by Tecumseh and allied with the British during the War of 1812, were again confronted with a kind of warfare which sought to obliterate their mode of existence. The Shawnee/British confederacy was defeated in 1813, and by 1820 the surviving populations were subject to mass deportations across the Mississippi. A panorama of U.S. military campaigns were mounted against the Muskogees, Seminoles,

and the Sac and Fox, each accompanied by massacre and duplicitous treaty negotiation.

The passage of the Indian Removal Act in 1830 led to the series of atrocities known today as the “Trail of Tears”. Indigenous nations east of the Mississippi were concentrated, interned, and then forcibly marched westward for hundreds of miles. Lack of food, shelter, and medical attention, along with the continuous forced labor, achieved the legislation’s desired effect of drastically reducing the indigenous populations in the process of dislodging them from their ancestral territory. The Choctaw, Chickasaw, Creek, Cherokee, and Seminole nations suffered immense losses of up to 55% of their remaining populations. By 1840 this process was largely complete with only a residue of indigenous society remaining in the eastern third of the continent.

The nineteenth century in the United States was marked by drastic territorial expansion. Land east of the Mississippi, which had largely been promised as a permanent Native American domain, was gradually incorporated into the United States’ territorial body. The acquisition of the Oregon territory from Britain as well as the annexation of Texas and the cession of land following the Mexican-American War quickly inflated the United States to continental proportions. And as the notion of “manifest destiny” took root, the indigenous populations faced a multidirectional threat to their survival. The Apaches were decimated over the course of the century through extensive scalping on the part of white settlers, as well as through private militia campaigns aimed at clearing the desired land of its inhabitants. Throughout the American west, ordinary citizens organized to terrorize and exterminate the native populations. Hundreds of massacres were committed by frontier settlers who showed no hesitation in killing men, women, children, and the elderly alike. Not only were these atrocities praised by the press of the day, but the perpetrators were paid handsomely by their governments for the physical evidence of their deeds in the form of mutilated scalps. In many cases, the United States military was dispensed only to finish the task of annihilating certain western indigenous groups, or else to subdue peoples that the general citizenry could not properly intimidate. This genocidal strategy led to the extinction of the majority of California’s indigenous peoples by the end of the century. This pace was maintained in Oregon as several campaigns were launched against the native inhabitants of the Columbia River plateau, with devastating

consequences. A multitude of peoples including the Walla Walla, Yakima, Umatilla, Palouse, Cayuse, Takelama, and Tutuni became the victims of the settler population's unrelenting aggression. The Nez Perce band who refused to sell their land to the Americans were pursued for over one thousand miles in their attempt to find freedom from persecution in Canada.

While the carnage was reaching a point of consummation in the west, the Great Plains region of the country was for a time considered to be the conceded territory of the various Plains Indians, including the Lakotas, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Crows, Shoshonis, Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa Apaches. The 1851 Fort Laramie treaty formally acknowledged native sovereignty over the massive geography, but just like the multitude of preceding U.S.-native treaties, it was unceremoniously violated. Waves of white settlers prospecting for gold in the Rocky Mountains established illegal settlements in the recognized indigenous territory. Rather than enforce the terms of the treaty, upheld as the "supreme Law of the Land" by Article 6 of the Constitution, the United States instead orchestrated a new treaty to supplant the 1851 instrument. The decidedly fraudulent 1861 treaty ceded over 90% of the native territory, and the subsequent native resistance to this injustice was deemed to be an unacceptable aggression. Preparations were then made to effect the extermination of these nations. The Civil War broke out during this time, and while this diverted the military's attention for a handful of years, it did not stop several atrocities from occurring at the hands of citizens and militias. The Santee Dakotas were eviscerated in 1862 when they were forced to rise up after the United States cut off their food supply. Warriors and noncombatants alike were killed, in keeping with the American's tendencies, survivors were corralled into cattle pens, and 303 Santee men were condemned to death. Even though President Lincoln pardoned 264 of them, the hanging of the remaining 38 constituted the largest mass execution in U.S. history. Their land was impounded by the government, and the survivors were relocated to a small, barren reservation on the Missouri River. Shoshonis in Utah and Idaho also fell victim to the white settler's brutality when they too dared to resist starvation at the hands of encroaching, and illegal, Mormon settlements. The result was the Bear Creek Massacre in which a regiment of volunteer cavalymen slaughtered as many as 500 Shoshonis - men, women, and children. Almost needless to say, the dead were mutilated in the most sadistic manner, and women were

raped just the same. The volunteers then returned to civilian life in California where they could continue their homicidal activities.

The infamous Sand Creek Massacre was a particularly shameful display occurring at the outset of the United States' campaign against the Cheyennes in 1864. In November of that year, Colonel John Chivington led a militia to attack a defenseless Cheyenne village who were complying with a peace parley. The volunteer militia struck at dawn with instructions to kill and scalp every member of the tribe, despite the fact that the encampment was flying an American flag, as well as a white flag. Up to 500 Cheyenne were killed in the massacre, the majority being women and children. The attack was so blatantly criminal that even the U.S. government conducted three investigations, each finding Chivington guilty. No punishment or reparations were administered, however, and after a series of unsuccessful treaties the military again commenced efforts to exterminate the nation. General Phil Sheridan led this campaign, and under his command was the Seventh Cavalry Regiment led by Lt. Colonel George Custer. Custer instructed his men to attack and massacre a Cheyenne encampment on the Washita River, resulting in the deaths of 103 Cheyenne, 93 of whom were women, old men, and children. The Washita Massacre broke the back of significant Cheyenne resistance in the southern plains, and by 1869 most survivors had surrendered. By the early twentieth century they would decline to near extinction. The United States then spent the first half of the next decade exporting destruction to the proximate indigenous societies who were enraged by the massacres and false treaties. Not only this, but the army had been affecting the unofficial policy of destroying the buffalo population for years, and the influx of settlers were slaughtering the animal for commercial as well as recreational purposes. In fact, the bison would nearly become extinct from this wholesale slaughter, in part brought about to affect the destruction of the native societies reliant on the animal. When the Comanches, Kiowas, and Kiowa Apaches acted on behalf of *their* own survival, they too were met with the United States' military force. In 1875, after being relentlessly tracked and brutalized, the last of these bands of people surrendered. They were stripped of their remaining landbase, rendered destitute, and their populations only continued to decline. The United States' conquest of the Southern Plains was complete.

In the Northern Plains, Oglala Lakota leader Red Cloud was assembling an indigenous alliance that would successfully resist the United States for some

time. Between 1866 and 1868 the allied Lakotas, Northern Cheyennes and Arapahos besieged illegally constructed forts and attacked a band of U.S. soldiers under the command of Captain William Fetterman in their unceded land. The strength of Red Cloud's alliance caused the United States to seek peace negotiations, culminating in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Since Red Cloud's assaults were wholly in response to the United States' violations of the then-binding 1851 treaty, the instrument drafted in 1868 largely reasserted these earlier terms. Under the new provisions no portion of the unceded native land, accounting for ~5% of the contiguous U.S. land mass, could be alienated in any form without the written consent of 75% of the adult male Lakota population. But the United States again disregarded its own laws when, in 1875, demands were made that the Lakota sell these lands. George Custer had claimed, without evidence, that gold had been discovered in the region in 1874, but after the presence of the mineral was confirmed the following year, conflict was imminent. The United States was already failing to prevent white prospectors from pouring into native lands, and when the Lakotas refused to sell, a war of aggression was declared in 1876. The indigeneous resistance, led by Lakota warrior Crazy Horse, produced several decisive victories at the outset of the fighting. One of these was the battle of Little Big Horn in which Custer's regiment, expecting to confront another defenseless village to massacre, was met with an overwhelming force. But in the winter of 1876 a new U.S. offensive was launched which scoured the plains, destroying each village they came across. Typical of the military's strategy by now, the troops killed noncombatants, slaughtered livestock, and pursued any survivors as they fled through the frosty wilderness. This devastating campaign lasted for months until the Lakota forces had to surrender. Crazy Horse was assassinated, and the interned Lakotas rations were withheld in order to pressure the leaders to relinquish title to the Black Hills. A mere 15% (not 75%) of the adult male population signed the document. The Ghost Dance, practiced in the wake of such devastating trauma, was by this time gaining momentum in the plains. The ceremony was perceived as a threat by the United States and more than 3000 troops were deployed to end the practice. Lakota leader Sitting Bull was murdered, and on December 29th, 1890, the Seventh Cavalry (formerly under Custer's command) perpetrated the Wounded Knee massacre. The regimen captured a band of Lakota led by Spotted Elk, and proceeded to disarm and slaughter them. The premeditated massacre left over 300 dead, and on New Year's Day, 1891, the bodies were piled into a mass grave. The Northern Plains had been stolen.

By 1900, the United States had grown into an empire of continental proportions. All aboriginal peoples inside its claimed boundaries had either been exterminated, or were confined to scant reservations deemed unusable by the dominant society. Interestingly, it is around this time that the U.S. altered its policy in these matters to promote “assimilation”. While this strategy offered a more “humanitarian” appearance, the policies put in place were still devoted to the destruction and nullification of colonized indigenous cultures (in a word, genocidal). In 1887, Congress had passed the Dawes Act which was among the first of these initiatives. This act was designed to supplant a traditional indigenous communal relationship to land with the Western capitalist conception of private property. Tribal holdings were divided into individual parcels to be given to members determined on the basis of a blood quantum. Any remaining land was deemed excess and swiftly appropriated. By 1934, 100 million acres, or 2/3 of the total remaining native landbase, had been stripped from these communities. The remaining indigenous peoples were declared to be American citizens, and the practice of their spiritual traditions were outlawed.

These policies of forced assimilation were clearly devastating to Native North Americans. One of the most enduring and destructive of these policies was the practice of sending the nation’s indigenous youth to government-run boarding schools. For the greater part of the century, native children across the country were essentially kidnapped and relocated to a boarding school professing to instill qualities of “civilization”. Upon arrival, the youth were punished for expressing any aspect of their native heritage, including the practice of their spirituality and the use of their language. Many of these schools espoused the instruction of technical skills, and children were therefore worked for long hours in agricultural and industrial capacities. They were indoctrinated into cultural and religious systems (many of the schools were Christian missions) which were completely foreign to them, and all the while they suffered every kind of abuse imaginable. Sexual abuse was particularly rampant, and physical punishment was routine. The trauma generated by this infrastructure of ethnic cleansing is incalculable, but its existence remains hardly acknowledged by mainstream American society.

And as the twentieth century progressed in this manner, the United States unleashed yet another wave of genocidal policies against Native North

America. World War II saw the creation of the Manhattan Project, an effort by the United States to produce the most powerful weapons in the history of humankind. Discovery of uranium in the northern reaches of the Navajo reservation allowed for the development of nuclear weapons such as those used against the Japanese civilian populations of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Then, once the U.S.S.R began developing similar nuclear capacities, the United States rapidly accelerated its nuclear development. Around this time, the U.S. was seeking to consolidate a global hegemony, and central planning efforts largely sought to bolster military investments. The resulting policies would lead to numerous international catastrophes in the subsequent decades, many of which are very well known today. Though the lesser-known impacts of the diplomatic “Cold War”, and the attending nuclear arms race, are the ways in which native communities were sacrificed in the interest of an imperial superpower vying for global ascendancy. The mining and milling of uranium ore, as well as nuclear weapons testing and later disposal of nuclear waste was purposefully done on or around indigenous communities, and to devastating effect. As part of this plan, the Navajo community, rendered destitute by the U.S. government, was provided with the “opportunity” of employment in unventilated uranium mines. The vast operation exposed hundreds of miners to highly toxic vapors causing obscene rates of cancer. The vast amounts of water (hundreds of millions of gallons) pumped from these mines contaminated the local water supplies with radioactive chemicals and heavy metals. As birth defects and cancer rates in these communities skyrocketed, mining only increased. In fact, around 90% of all U.S. uranium mining occurred on or adjacent to native reservations. In addition to confining (for the time being) the radioactive consequences of mining to communities already on the margins of American society, the taxpayer-subsidized corporations issued scant wages and neglected to provide anything even remotely resembling adequate safety infrastructure. Each corner cut only served to enhance the industry’s massive profits, inversely proportional to the damage inflicted on the indigenous communities of the American west. Milling, the process of separating pure uranium from ore, was a process necessarily just as expansive as mining-- and just as destructive. Millions of tons of uranium ore were processed in mills on the Navajo, Laguna, and Acoma communities. Enormous piles of uranium tailings, coarse radioactive sand particles, were piled outside of the mines and mills. They often were left to either leach into the groundwater, or else be scattered by the wind. These tailings revealed themselves to be a



massive waste product that the nuclear interests had neither the means nor the will to dispose of properly. It was revealed that tailings were used in the “improvement” of the Laguna Pueblo’s road network, as well as in the concrete foundations of the civic centers built in the community by the “philanthropic” corporations.

Such a massive industrial undertaking, with such neglect for human safety, inevitably produced horrific environmental disasters. One of these was the Church Rock spill, occurring on July 16, 1979, in which a massive mill dam was breached. Over a hundred million gallons of highly radioactive water was released into the neighboring Navajo community in this disaster alone. By this time, over *500 million tons* of radioactive tailings had accumulated in the Four Corners region. The area, as well as the Black Hills in the northern plains, were under consideration for designation as “sacrifice” areas to accommodate U.S energy interests. These two areas consist of the first and second largest concentrations of reservation-dwelling American Indians. Yet all of this damage, much of which is irreversible, was only serving as a means to an equally destructive end. The development, and extensive *testing* of nuclear weapons, is a process that has had an incredibly destructive effect on indigenous peoples and lands. The United States’ testing of nuclear bombs in the Marshall Islands, for instance, led to the forced removal of the native populations on the Bikini Atoll. 23 detonations later, the inhabitants were returned to the island where they were subject to intense radiation poisoning. On the mainland, Western Shoshone lands were appropriated for the creation of military test sites, and ever-increasing amounts of land were converted into bombing ranges. Sacred sites were destroyed, and the fallout of such a massive release of radioactive particles into the atmosphere and bioregion has had a catastrophic impact on the surrounding populations. Decades of nuclear development has produced hundreds of detonations, billions of tons of nuclear waste, and untold deaths from cancer and other radiation related illnesses. Astronomical amounts of waste have been generated with little to no plan for reliable disposal. Native communities have been largely targeted as potential sites for hasty waste storage.

While the brunt of this toxic development has been shouldered by American Indian communities, deemed expendable by the government, the widespread environmental contamination has extended to the broader American population, as well as the global community. And all of this harm

was done with full knowledge of the extreme danger that nuclear infrastructure posed to human and ecological health. Yet, the government consistently suppressed studies and litigation that found radioactive particles culpable for negative health outcomes. Oftentimes an explosion of cancer rates in these areas has been blamed on cigarette smoke. It is certainly the case that U.S. government planning seeks to offload the bulk of energy-related collateral damage on indigenous communities. This trend constitutes genocide, as well as a large-scale and essentially irreversible ecocide.

. . .

To an astute historian the above account would seem a thoroughly incomplete summary. The 500-year process of American Indian genocide, the general countour and form of which I have attempted to communicate, cannot be confined to so few pages. To the majority of Americans, however, this information might come as a shock. It certainly came as a shock to me. The argument that the United States' policies towards the indigenous peoples of the continent constitute genocide is thoroughly consistent with the definition of the crime according to international law, and the implications of that argument run deep. Moreover, the process continues to this day. Seen in this light, the construction of oil pipelines through reservations like Standing Rock is just one more in a long series of affronts to indigneous sovereignty. All told, the pre-contact indigenous population of North America was likely as high as 15 million. The hemispheric population could have been as high as 112 million. This has been reduced by as much as 99%.

Writers such as Churchill help illuminate an important concept: colonialism. Many nations today, including the United States, constitute what is known as a *settler colonial* state. This means that, unlike other forms of colonization in which foreign peoples are subjugated and exploited economically, the colonizing power additionally seeks to replace the aboriginal population with a demographic of colonizing settlers. This is a process which *necessitates* genocide. Yet these realities must be obfuscated if the colonial state is to maintain the posture of legitimacy. So, it is little wonder that the facts pertaining to this matter are often replaced with mythological narratives, convenient exaggerations, and outright falsities. The systems and institutions of knowledge production overlook these facts as a matter of course, or else choose to interpret them in a way which is

convenient for the status quo. The terms of discussion and debate are then constructed in a way which excludes arguments built upon this foundation.

The fact is that this foundation is ugly. In many ways it is easier to assume a blissful ignorance of these facts than it is to deal directly in truths. For many, coming to terms with an argument such as this can entail a process which is emotionally and intellectually strenuous. The case of this author bears no exception. Yet, trudging through such darkness is a process which ultimately yields fruit. This knowledge is transformative, and in the apparently barren wasteland of our staggering society, the roots can find something to clutch. An idea begins to photosynthesize. A flower emerges.

### *THE LIBRARY / THE GARDEN*

Colonialism is a vast project. Its influence extends into the cultural and philosophical, not to mention the material. Its effects also extend globally, as various European powers colonized not only the Americas, but also Africa, Oceania, India, the Arctic, Palestine, and parts of Europe itself. Each of these geographies has seen the process unfold differently, but the overall narrative has undergone certain developments since World War II. One of these is the birth of a global indigenous peoples' movement. As indigenous peoples across the globe have continued organizing in the struggle for autonomy, and for the end of genocide, certain modes of resistance have adapted. Terms have been created. Tools developed, research conducted, analyses performed, and books published. Eyes have been moved, and the inertia continues to accumulate. A book turns into a library. Its shelves are lined with an interesting variety of literature. This section will serve as a casual survey of some such literature, both immediately and proximately connected to the issues at hand.

Our first stop in the library is essential. We have arrived at the literature of *decolonization*. Here we can find books like this one: Decolonizing Methodologies by Linda Tuhiwai Smith. In these pages a formal response to 500 years of colonial oppression is articulated from the perspective of a prominent Maori researcher. The decolonial project is explained as a process which “engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels” (21). One of these levels is knowledge production and preservation. Seeing as how indigenous societies have produced entire systems of knowledge and wisdom independent of the West, which have been destroyed or else treated as another resource subject to the mechanisms of colonial extraction, the efforts to protect, reclaim, and advance these knowledges are integral to the decolonial project. But decolonization should not be understood as being restricted to the realms of the

academic or intellectual. Its efforts extend to the everyday, the physical, the spiritual, the cultural, the political: to any realm touched by colonization. Reclaiming land, asserting treaty rights, revitalizing language, producing research, literature, and philosophy, blurring colonial distinctions, strengthening traditions, healing, mobilizing, storytelling, and striving for self-determination are all elements of a decolonial agenda. This is by no means an exhaustive list. In this section of the library we find the burgeoning and already extensive literature of decolonization. The character of this literature *must* be essential as we move forward, and the themes of decolonization will be revisited throughout. But we must continue with the tour, for there is much left to explore.

The next stop in our library is where we will find books concerning indigenous ways of knowing and being, or “epistemologies” and “ontologies”. Is it philosophy? Is it anti-philosophy? You tell me. Here, we’ll find books like this one: God Is Red by Vine Deloria Jr. Writers such as Deloria have worked to describe the stark differences between colonial religions and native spiritual practices, as well as discuss the implications of such a profound divide. Deloria posits that Christian belief systems prioritize conceptions of history and time over those of nature and space. Whereas Christianity derives its tenants from the temporal proposition that Jesus Christ was born, died, and will come again, native spirituality is derived from a relationship with nature, its varied inhabitants, and the natural spaces that people interact with. Very much in line with the former, the United States’ history tends towards a linear temporal construction built on a logic of “progress” and “advancement” (“manifest destiny”), but authors like Delora assert an alternative. The global ecology of human society has produced a profound diversity of thought that offers compelling perspectives on notions as central as work, family, democracy, spirituality, and time. This is what should be a breathtaking sight worthy of nothing short of celebration. Yet, the Western world through colonization has consistently asserted an ideology of cultural superiority, and this has served to tragically homogenize global society. And while the object here is not to assert a cultural superiority one way or the other, it is painfully clear that the constructions of Western culture are deeply flawed. While its institutions are successful in importing vast amounts of the global wealth into narrow segments of society, they are all too effective in exporting destruction to the global majority. This destruction not only extends to the colonized peoples of the world, but indeed to the world itself. The fact of the matter is that Western cultural tenets establish a relationship with nature that is based on domination and extraction, and the true consequences of such a relationship are unfolding today. What’s worse, they are unfolding tomorrow. Indigenous spirituality, to speak generally, is built on a reciprocal relationship with nature. It is this reciprocity which affords sustainability. And it is important to note that the actual

philosophical differences between colonial and indigenous traditions are just as compelling as an analysis of the *implications* of those differences. Our library would not be complete without a literature addressing both of these topics.

But while it is vital not to understate the importance of the alternative conceptions of history, nature, and spirituality found in indigenous traditions, it is necessary that we continue to explore the other sections of our library. There is a wide selection of literature that is *congruent* with the aims of decolonization, even if these goals are not explicitly stated. Allow me to show you around.

First and foremost, we have literature pertaining to the many other peoples who have struggled against the structures of colonization, although they may or may not identify as indigenous. Black Americans have been engaged in a sustained struggle against colonial systems of slavery and racist oppression for centuries, and the fight is far from over. Today, black bodies are subject to criminalization through mass incarceration and are murdered by the police with impunity. Their literature can be found in our library. The literature of immigrants, fleeing from the destruction wrought by U.S. imperialism and persecuted according to a colonialist racial hierarchy, can also be found in our library.

The literature of feminism and queer studies can be found in our library. Colonial culture has steadfastly upheld a rigorous patriarchy which not only marginalizes non-male members of society to varying degrees, but also enforces a general ignorance on matters concerning sexuality and gender. Colonial notions of gender enforce a harmful binary, in addition to perpetuating all forms of limiting stereotypes. Yet the problem extends beyond misinformation and ignorance. Violence is a very real and all-too-common result of such a problematic set of beliefs, and non-male peoples suffer gender violence at endemic rates.

We can also find an extensive literature on the subject of... that's right, capitalism! Critiques of capitalism are many and varied, and the United States itself has a kind of tragic history of anti-capitalist organization. Anti-capitalist notions span different ideologies, cultures, and eras, though not all are equal. For instance, Marxism has been criticized by the late indigenous leader Russel Means as being a false remedy. Many posit that communist ideologies presuppose industrial and statist structures that are fundamentally unsustainable, or else patently colonial. As capitalism is a core element of modern imperial-colonial society, our library would be remiss without a section to accommodate the history of responses to this system. Of course, this library privileges discourse that is consistent with the needs of indigeneity.

Our library thus begins to unfold in this manner as a network of intersecting topics, identities, and genres. Alas, our structured tour begins to unwind. And, seeing as how you've made it this far, we can now embark on the *helicopter experience-of-a-lifetime through our curated landscape of freely associated word jumbles*! Did that grab your attention? I'm ashamed to admit that it grabbed mine. You see, our library just doesn't come equipped with the adrenaline-fueled Grand Canyon-style adventures that you might reasonably expect. As far as revolutionary praxes goes, this one is not particularly catchy or concise. Granted, it is consistent! We can all agree that human rights are: good! But is it entertaining? I'm not sure.

That is, unless you find sustainability literature entertaining. Or literature on urban decay, deindustrialization, blight, crime, poverty, drugs... because our library has *ample* room for these!

If you find urban farming literature entertaining, then by all means! It seems like a creative way to reintegrate the natural environment into the artificial one! We encourage you to look into all manner of books about sustainable energy, permaculture, green living, and appropriate technology... the list goes on!

Let's put it this way. If our library were on display in a museum of other libraries, the plaque next to ours would read: MEDIA: MIXED. The plaque would then guide you directly to the section that we have for books on media! Pop culture, alternative culture, new culture, old culture, our library is all-inclusive. Comedy, tragedy, who cares? And *all* of it is out there (right here!) just waiting to be checked out!

See, our library here blossoms (when you give it enough time) into a sort of choose-your-own-adventure. Our catalogue extends wonderfully to encompass a wide array of colors, shapes, and flavors. Some are practical. *Some are just beautiful*. A garden, if you will.

And you see, this is *our* garden. You can check out some books if you'd like and plant one for yourself, but I have the feeling that you've already started. Maybe you've got a little patch out back that you've been eyeing for a while now. Maybe it doesn't seem that daunting after all! It's even easy, effortless, once you just have the right information.

This brings us here, to *my* garden. It's only special in that it's mine. And if you're even here, I'm sure that I don't have to talk too much about it. I just have to talk about the obvious questions that routinely present themselves on life's occasions (like a college graduation, for example) for which there are no answers. Here's a good one: what in the everlovingshit do I do with my life?

I like that one.

It's a good question because the answer changes from person to person. It even changes from moment to moment for *each* person. Soup, or salad?

How can you accomplish x, y, and z? What even are x, y, and z? Wait, who the fuck am I?

Well, to help you answer that question might I most humbly remind you of a certain picture that we painted a little while ago? I hate to be the bearer of bad news, but even since we painted that picture matters have, shall we say, *developed*.

I only remind you of this picture because, well, while you've been doing whatever it is that you've been doing (rewarding and positive, I'm sure), that picture has only been growing increasingly, uhhhhhhh fucked.

And there's still light around the edges, of course! It might even be growing in proportion to the greyness. It's fundamentally the same picture, and it's still comprehensible. It tells all kinds of abstract truths, and it tells one very concrete one. Humans might not make it. We might, in this lifetime, succumb under the weight of our own evil stupidity. Those of us that are around in one hundred years might wish that they weren't. They might understandably wish that they were us instead. Oh, to just experience the incredible luxury of agency! Or maybe they'll manage to get by with a formidable dose of our society's drug of choice: ignorance. But whatever manner of dystopian future you choose to imagine, and it can be rewarding and positive to do so, can be found in its proper section in *our* library.

The point is that it's *your* garden. You can plant whatever you want. I'm just asking you to keep this in mind when you decide what to plant. You know, *factor it in*. To your *calculations*.

A very wise person once said, "there are two kinds of people in this world: bosses and chumps." Bosses revel in the treasures of love and harmony that this unfolding

playground that we call the world is constantly providing for us as a regular bounty. Chumps, well, I can only imagine that they don't.

So what's left to say? Neither of us here is a chump, so how can we get in on some of that harmony? What can one person do in the face of a problem the size of the world? Some would suggest that rather than wasting valuable time trimming back weeds, we start to plant seeds.

The idea here is that the seed, properly nurtured, will one day grow into a tree, a forest, and maybe even a just and sustainable future. It might require a little patience.

So, since we're talking seeds, let's think small. What's the smallest, bestest thing that you can do??

Mickey's answer:

I can sell art (*and so can you!*).

It's so simple that it's laughable.

*AND NOW, THE COMEDY! / STRATEGY, SPIRIT, AND THE JOY OF CORPORATE SYNERGY*

Here's the setup:

Me, you, and a CD walk into an abandoned house. The house is one of many owned by the city of Saint Louis. Years of deindustrialization and "white flight" have led to the gradual depopulation of many of the city's historic neighborhoods. Textbook urban decay. Since the city no longer receives tax revenues from these properties, and since they are costly to maintain, it is in the interests of the city to find owners for these houses. They've even created programs to facilitate this. The Land Reutilization Authority (LRA) is the city government agency that holds and sells these properties. Anyone willing to put in the effort to fix up the place could buy a two-story brick house from the city for \$2000. That's only 200 CD's at \$10 apiece.

Here's the punchline:

Community Land Trust, or CLT. It's a kind of real-estate nonprofit that holds and leases property. They're usually created in order to ensure the affordability of housing even as market prices change. They can also be used for conservation purposes. Once a CLT owns the land, it doesn't sell it to make a profit. It's goal is to forever maintain the land's



integrity and affordability to any prospective residents. Sounds wholesome enough. This means that 200 CD's and no small amount of paperwork later, we could be looking at not only a house, but also a nonprofit to own and manage any number of houses that we're able to pry away from the speculators, developers, and gentrifiers.

And what then, now that we're going strong in the anti-real estate business?

Well, anything! We're in the club now! The unchecked power and freedom of corporate America is ours to use and misuse! If corporate tyranny is to come out on top, then why not get in on the action? And you know what they say: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. And join them we must. We are the tyrants, the architects, and the shareholders. We can design a bad corporation, or we can design a *good* one. We can sell *good* products that do *good* things. Artists can stop wasting energy vying for our 15 minutes in the attention economy, and start harnessing our creative potential, however seemingly meager. People like me can finally acquiesce to the entertainment industry's incessant demands that we *become* products and sell *ourselves* to the public because however uncomfortable it may be, it is no longer immoral. In fact, it's the most moral thing that I can think of. I now implore you! Buy me! Buy my art, buy my soul, my image, my words, my music, everything you could ever want is contained within the borders of this *unique* and *shiny* product.

And *that's* the joy of corporate synergy. All manner of creative jargon is available to us to use! Corporations have no qualms about concocting entire dictionaries of mind-numbing word vomit and force-feeding it to the multitudes who have no choice but to slave endlessly for a wage from an entity that has absolutely no stake in their wellbeing. So why shouldn't we take advantage of the same liberty? We can even accomplish something beautiful along the way. Plus, it's fun to play word games.

So that's the plan. You buy my CD. We plant a seed.

The tree will be whatever we let it be. Will it provide shelter for the homeless? Will it provide food and water? Energy for a community? Will it be a community workspace? A studio? A market? All of the above?

Will it *decolonize*?

I believe it *can*.

Some time ago, when this paper was in its nascent stages, I reached out to the Osage nation about this idea. Saint Louis is constructed on Osage ancestral territory, and the

nation has strong ties to the city. They recently purchased the last surviving native cultural mound inside the city limits. I had a brief email exchange with someone from the Osage Nation Historic Preservation Office in which I described the CLT. She, very understandably, wasn't overwhelmed with an eagerness to collaborate. But the offer of course still stands. But short of direct collaboration with the Osage nation, this project can still work to educate about colonization. It can still recognize land as indigenous, and it can still promote an imaginative and polycultural future.

Today, I graduate. I leave you with this thought.

maybe it *is* nothing.  
 maybe it is something, but it's small.  
 how small is one future?  
 if mine's the size of yours, it can't be *that* small  
 just vast enough for one moment, one thought, one scribble, furious, and impassioned,  
 SATURATED WITH VIGOR  
 BECAUSE IF IT IS ANYTHING LESS  
 it might just *be* nothing.

a good friend of mine once said  
 i have all these worlds in my head, and it would be nice to get some of them out!  
 well, here we are.  
 laid bare, freed from the constraints, painfully visible  
 like so many vulnerable things  
 like a prophecy scribbled into a notebook and hastily  
 torn out