

Final Creative Project

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Abstract

The narrative of America's past is paramount to the actions and problems that we address today. Without acknowledging the nation's shortcomings and history, it is impossible to address modern structural issues in an effective manner. For our final creative project, we have decided to express the lesser known narratives of American history through poems on intersectionality, settler colonialism, and class. We have chosen intersectionality because it is applicable to all people, as we all have different intersect identities that work together to shape our experiences. For example, one such identity is class, which has deep ties to the diverse campus here at UC Merced. We've also chosen settler colonialism as a topic because the land we are currently located on was originally inhabited by Yokuts and Miwuks. We have chosen to express these ideas through poetry because it encapsulates ideas through a form, diction, and structure that encourages deeper analysis and thought from the reader. We believe that it is the perfect medium that parallels the critical thinking required to fully grasp the weight of American history on modern issues.

First Draft

“Colors”

Intersectionality

Red, the color of valor and bravery:

- Blood
- Perseverance
- Ancestor’s history, working in the mines
- Flag imagery (red flag with yellow stars)
 - Stars to represent American Dream

White, the color of purity and innocence:

- Empty canvas
- Purity, religion, docility
- Patriarchal expectations
 - Women viewed as submissive, subservient, etc,

Blue, the color of vigilance, perseverance, justice:

- Sky, ocean, etc.
 - Vastness → freedom?
- Blue → political party (democrats)
 - Loss of democracy
- Blue → literally feeling blue, sorrow

Colors:

- Symbol of American history/expectations
- Difficult to escape
- Defined society

“still the rivers whisper”

Settler Colonialism

- Land's legacy
 - land was never empty; it holds history and stories.
 - personify nature?
- Conquest/erasure
 - destruction
 - irony of discovery
- Legal justification for oppression
 - legal rulings; nations to wards.
 - trust doctrines
- Trail of tears
 - historical atrocity; watered the soil with grief and blood.
 - defiance
- Cultural genocide
 - songs and stories persist
- Ongoing exploitation
 - env destruction; land desecration continues legacy of theft
 - treaties remain disregarded
- Enduring history
 - land holds the weight of history

“Dumb poem”

Class

We the people of the United States
Spend so much time in political debates
So many problems that are to be solved
Seem to never go away at all

And so we look at those in charge
With their wealth that's so large
We ask them to help us out
“No way!” some of them shout

But some others seem to want to help
And graciously allocate us some wealth
But almost in a blink of an eye
Systematically it all runs dry

This nation is not built for you and me
It's for those with power you see
This notion of an American Dream
May just be a giant scheme

Final Draft

“Colors”

Intersectionality

Red, the color of valor and bravery,
the color that runs through my veins.
Red, the color that bled from our palms
and the soles of our feet in the rain.

Red represents my ancestors' plight,
Framed by the stars in the sky.
The stars that they chased, that were too far to reach,
instead were the rocks in the mines.

White is the color of purity and innocence,
a slate which is meant to be blank.
White is the color of smiling brides,
and the dress that's adorned by the saints.

White represents what's expected from me,
since a woman should know where she sits
at the table of fathers and uncles and men,
for or else she's perceived as a bitch.

Blue is vigilance, perseverance, justice,
the color that paints the sky.
Blue is our oceans, our seas, and our lakes,
the freedom we seek when we cry.

Blue represents the democracy lost
and the hope that I held for our kind.
It's the feeling that festers inside of my soul
and the silence that's since filled my mind.

The colors that fly in the sky up above
are the colors defining our rule.
It seems that no matter how hard that I try,
I am followed by red, white, and blue.

“still the rivers whisper”

Settler Colonialism

This land was never empty.
It sang with names before conquest,
with rivers that whispered stories
in languages buried under concrete.

Boots crushed earth,
treaties burned; smoke rising like ghosts.
They called it discovery; arriving meant erasing.
As if claiming meant stealing could be law.

The gavel struck: a chorus of lies.
"Occupancy;" but not sovereignty.
"Domestic dependent;" nations into wards,
power locked in chains of trust.

On the trail of tears, the soil was watered
with grief. A march that left footprints
in blood. Roots ripped from the ground,
but still defiant, stretching deeper.

“Kill the Indian, save the man.”
They stole the children, their tongues,
their songs, their stories.
But songs do not die. They hide,
waiting for the wind to remember.

The concrete cracks;
roots pushing through like fists.
Still they steal, pipelines piercing sacred land,
still the treaties burn,
still the rivers whisper.

The land remembers.
The weight of history,
in every stone, every tree.

“We Keep Fighting”

Class

We are the people of the United States
Spend so much time in political debates
There's so many problems that are to be solved
Somehow seem to never go away at all

And naturally we look at those in charge
With their abundant wealth that is just so large
Although we voted for them to help us out
Thoughts and prayers is all some of them can spout

But at least some others seem to want to help
And graciously allocated us some wealth
But basically in a blink of an eye
Systematically it all still runs dry

Today's nation is not built for you and me
It's for those with money and power you see
From access to healthcare and education
To tax cuts that saves wealth for generations

This narrative of the American Dream
Could possibly just be a devious scheme
So just know that everyday we keep fighting
Is another day someone is just thriving