

Book Review: Glen Coulthard, *Red Skins White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2014)

Essentially, in his book *Red Skins White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, Glen Coulthard presents the theory behind the Idle No More movement in Canada. The work offers a critical reading of a range of political theory, but at times, and with convincing cases and logic, it reads as a manifesto for righteous rebellion in the Canadian state. He raises the question; what would purposeful recognition look like? He rebuts almost every government policy in the negative. His five theses put forth at the end of the book are direct action; anti-capitalism; sovereignty in cities; gender justice and decolonization; and a movement beyond the nation-state towards a refurbishment of the traditional political and economic practices of indigenous people. In a bold theoretical move, this work invokes authors at the heart of the African anti-colonial movements in the 1960s and 1970s and attempts to narrate and shape the basis of FN resurgence and the strengthening of anti-colonialism in Canada.

Situating the discussion within the Canadian politics of recognition, Coulthard effectively argues that both the academic and policy debates in Canada are little more than a furtherance of colonial thinking. Of particular note is a rather complete critique of Seyla Benhabib's theories of nonessentialist deliberative democracy, which, he claims, "reinforce a colonial structure of dominance." (Coulthard 2014 p.97) For instance, Coulthard argues, gender disparity in FN communities mostly arose from the creation of Canada and therefore Benhabib's proposition that gender equality within FN communities will be achieved through recognition in the Canadian state seems paradoxical at best. (Coulthard 2014 p.99)

Coulthard's main point is clear, namely that First Nations (FN) can use their valid resentments to further strengthen themselves individually and as communities. As he aptly documents through several white papers, bills and agreements, being 'recognized' by the Canadian state is not often working in the favour of First Peoples (FP). He invokes Marx in part to show that within the current politico-economic system is not possible for indigenous communities to regain their strength, land and practices.

Although Coulthard connects with literature related to Africa's sovereignty and independence, does not bring forth the long debates about modernization in global politics, but he may well have in order to further illustrate his point. Modernization theory, related to indigenous dispossession, has been a central part of postcolonial criticism. As Edward Said so aptly discusses in *Orientalism*, the portrayal of the "other" as weak and incapable is a fundamental first step of colonialism and its progeny modernization theory. (Said 1978) Mamdani has illustrated how deeply modernization has affected political systems and traditions in Uganda and the surrounding region. (Mamdani, 1996)

Coulthard is discussing the "settler-colony" of Canada, a term he uses throughout the book, yet part of the problem with invoking the international postcolonial movements is that one is left wondering what the difference is between settler-colonies and colonies in general. This is further complicated because much of the contemporary literature of postcolonialism itself questions the extent to which

colonialism has ended and the extent to which it is still operating through global structures and ideological systems. (Mbembe 2001)

This book is full of potential for further research programs, yet Coulthard's use of Fanon could be said to be vague. Given the sexualization of First Nation's females in Canada and the extent to which they are victims of violence, it is easy to draw a parallel to the detailed analysis in Fanon's *Black Skin and White Mask*. Yet Coulthard almost seems to lean more heavily on Fanon's more activist work *Wretched of the Earth*. (1961) Though not a Freudian analyst like Fanon, some of the accounts of these feelings and experiences would have strengthened his point that rebirth of a civilization must start with the inner gaze that Fanon describes in *Black Skin White Mask*.

Coulthard brings forth the spirit of 1970s 'south-south' politics as it was in the 1970s when groups like the *Dene* in British Columbia travelled across the world to meet anti-colonial leaders in Africa. It invokes what Mustapha Pasha (2013) has called the "Bandung Impulse," where in 1956, many cultures came together to establish peaceful global relationships and fair terms of trade. Coulthard demonstrates how "recognition" debates in Canada do much to perpetuate Canada's colonial position, demanding a response of resistance in order to protect First People's culture and self-worth.

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