

DECOLONIZATION DIALOGUES

a student written and designed
zine exploring decolonization
through various subjects.



THE CLIMATE ISSUE



by: ayushi das, bonita wankhade, delaney wong,



welcome to issue 1: climate of decolonization
dialogues! we are so excited to share this
project with you and we hope you leave this
issue with a committed understanding of
how to create climate justice.



INTRODUCTION

Millions of years of scientific processes have amalgamated to form the Earth as we know it in its physicality. But what has truly shaped it? Where does its story as a cultural entity come from? The answer lies in the various Indigenous, native, and tribal nations that have interacted with nature for generations. Indigenous cultures have sculpted themselves around the Earth through spiritual practices and oral histories. Their deep respect for nature and shrewd knowledge of its gifts have protected it for so long. The word "Indigenous" comes from words meaning "sprung from the land," making the land itself an integral part of all their identities.

We currently stand at a point in time where we risk damaging our climate beyond repair. Hundreds of years of forced displacement and illegal occupation have violently driven Indigenous peoples from their lands, removing with them their sustainable and respectful regard for the planet. Colonialism is a brutal force and is savagely intertwined with the destruction of our climate.

Yet what is bigger? Money and materialism? Or the force of nature bonded by entrenched communities? The resilience of native peoples has woven the first threads in the fabric of climate care. It is clear: to decolonize is to repair what has been damaged.

Issue 1 of Decolonization Dialogues will explore the relationship between indigeneity, colonization, and the land itself, and how we can study their relationship to find tangible solutions to the climate crisis rooted in indigenous practices.

We invite you to join us in redefining the climate activism space through a decolonized lens.

"The word 'Indigenous' comes from the Latin root indigene, which describes plants, animals, and people live in, grow on, and originate from a certain area. It follows that violence against the land is also violence against Indigenous people, flora, and fauna that occupy it. Indigenous people are also regarded as knowledgeable stewards of their land."



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INDIGENOUS STORIES IN LAND FORMATIONS

Palestinian olive trees have roots that run deeper than just the land. For Indigenous Palestinians, the olive tree is a deeply cultural symbol of gratitude for the historic lands of the nation. The first olive tree dates back thousands of years to the mountains of Galilee in northern Palestine, currently under Israeli occupation. 4,000 years of cultivation for olive oil, fruit production, soaps, prayer beads, and more have come to be integral to the identity of Palestine and the preservation of its land.

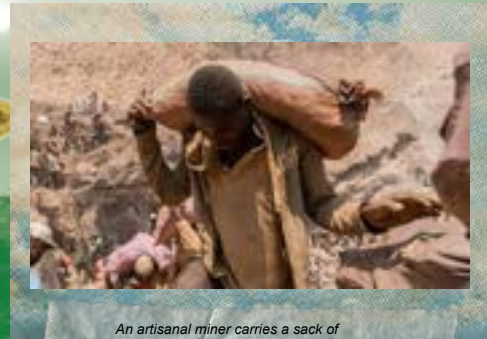
Israel has targeted the roots of the Palestinian people, illegally uprooting the olive trees— all of which have existed for thousands of years before Israel— and leading targeted campaigns against olive farmers.

Congolese resources are known (if at all) by the West as the cobalt, copper, and zinc that goes into engineering mobile phones. But for native tribes in the Democratic Republic of Congo, culture has been instrumented around the beautiful rainforests in the region. With over 250 ethnic tribes, Indigenous groups have each developed unique rites dedicated to respecting their land through sculptures, woodwork, and spiritual rituals. Market interests from Western economies and combined attacks from rebel groups have led to the deforestation of these sacred forests and human rights violations of indigenous tribes. The consequences? The resource-rich and biodiverse lands of the DRC are exploited and neglected by foreign intruders who cannot see beyond the monetary value of the climate.

Illiterate in the settler's language but fluent in the forests, the tribes of the DRC continue to share lessons with future generations on how to best appreciate the gift of nature. Through oral literature and folk dance celebrations of their ancestral terrains, they speak to the Earth in a language of their own.

"Patterns on the keffiyeh symbolize different aspects of Palestinian life: the bold black stripes on the edges symbolize the historical trade routes that used to go through Palestine; the fishnet-like design represents the Palestinians' ties to the Mediterranean Sea; and the curvy lines resemble olive trees"
—Linah Mohammad, NPR

The olive tree has become a crucial symbol of resistance, an identifiable pattern in keffiyehs worn by those demanding the liberation and safekeeping of Palestine's lands. The history of the olive tree is a story that resonates deeply with the Indigenous people of Palestine, who protect their trees like their own children and speak of its oil as their blood.



An artisanal miner carries a sack of ore at the Shabara artisanal mine near Kolwezi, DRC, on Oct. 12, 2022. Junior Kannah/AFP via Getty Images



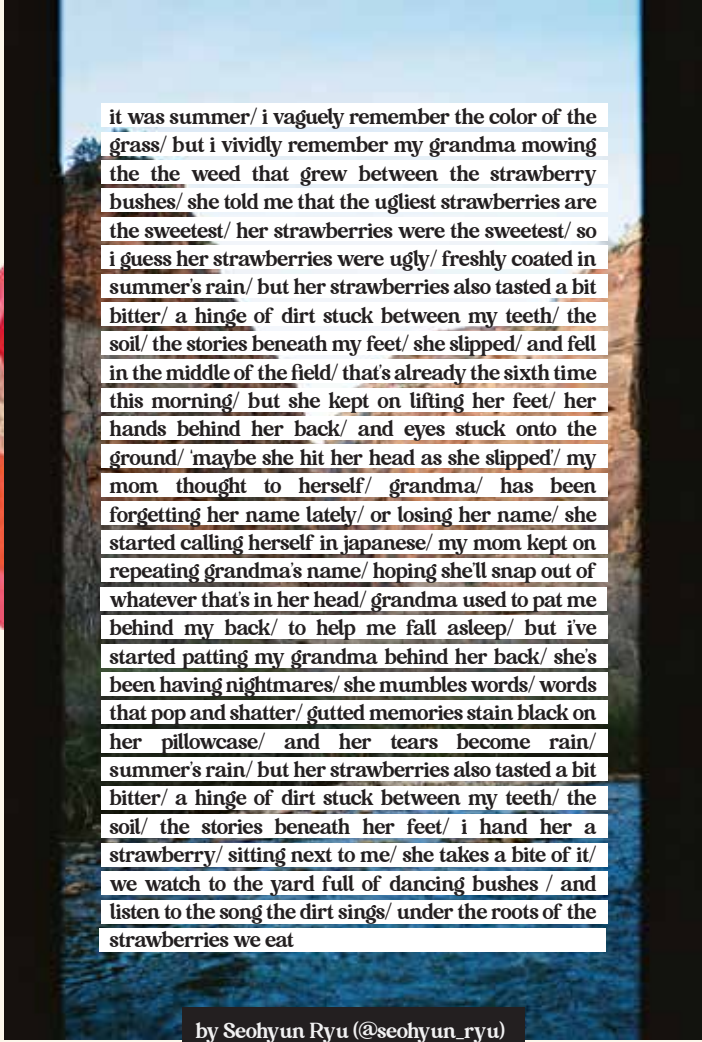
Child of flame



by Cameron Patel (@i_cam_read)

This piece is my first self portrait in years. It felt impossible to think of myself without thinking about this land I'm on, which has been set ablaze both literally and metaphorically. In that sense, this piece explores climate anxiety and its intersection with colonization. I cannot deny how my identity as an American is shaped by the destruction of this land and the oppression of its indigenous inhabitants, and so I paint myself amidst the forest fire. Nonetheless, there is a difference (both in distance and color palette) between myself and the fire. This is an attempt to distance myself from the destruction of colonization, and it is a representation of the gulf between my queer multiracial self and constructions of American identity.

This poem is about the everlasting effects of the trauma that drives from back when Korea was annexed by the Empire of Japan: effects on people as an individual and effects on the land itself.



it was summer/ i vaguely remember the color of the grass/ but i vividly remember my grandma mowing the the weed that grew between the strawberry bushes/ she told me that the ugliest strawberries are the sweetest/ her strawberries were the sweetest/ so i guess her strawberries were ugly/ freshly coated in summer's rain/ but her strawberries also tasted a bit bitter/ a hinge of dirt stuck between my teeth/ the soil/ the stories beneath my feet/ she slipped/ and fell in the middle of the field/ that's already the sixth time this morning/ but she kept on lifting her feet/ her hands behind her back/ and eyes stuck onto the ground/ maybe she hit her head as she slipped/ my mom thought to herself/ grandma/ has been forgetting her name lately/ or losing her name/ she started calling herself in japanese/ my mom kept on repeating grandma's name/ hoping she'll snap out of whatever that's in her head/ grandma used to pat me behind my back/ to help me fall asleep/ but i've started patting my grandma behind her back/ she's been having nightmares/ she mumbles words/ words that pop and shatter/ gutted memories stain black on her pillowcase/ and her tears become rain/ summer's rain/ but her strawberries also tasted a bit bitter/ a hinge of dirt stuck between my teeth/ the soil/ the stories beneath her feet/ i hand her a strawberry/ sitting next to me/ she takes a bite of it/ we watch to the yard full of dancing bushes / and listen to the song the dirt sings/ under the roots of the strawberries we eat

by Seohyun Ryu (@seohyun_ryu)

It Was Summer

DESTRUCTION OF ART, CULTURE, AND HISTORY

Colonization relies in part on changing narratives of history and manipulating important facets of culture to reframe the colonizer in a positive light through the destruction of important cultural, educational, and historical sites. For Palestine, The Central Archives were home to 150 years of Gazan records and history. The Great Omari Mosque contained a vast collection of books on philosophy, Islamic literature, medicine, and mathematics, documenting years of Palestinian academics.



Since October 7th, 2023, Israeli Occupation Forces have demolished these structures, various libraries, and every university in Gaza. Targeting sites that hold educational and historical significance erases documentation of Indigenous culture that allows colonizers to rewrite history, creating a false narrative that colonization was ordained by a higher power or committed as a means to save the Indigenous population from savagery. These narratives are created through systemic racism, dangerously rewriting history and withholding Indigenous identity as a native population with ties to their land.



PARALLEL

the loss of bhand pather folk theatre in kashmir. political violence in the region has corroded the cultural identity of kashmir, driving theater groups (bhands) into the ground.



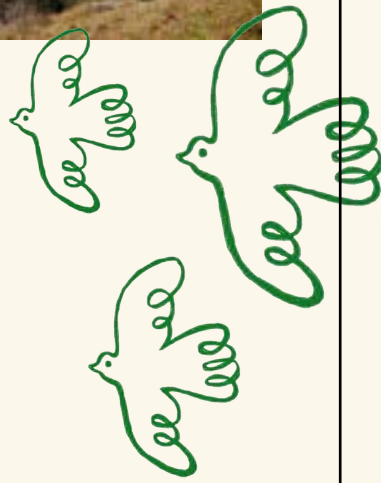
For the Eelam Tamil community in Sri Lanka, cultural erasure comes not only as a result of colonization but also of dangerous ethno-nationalism. Since Sri Lanka gained independence in 1948, systematic legal discrimination has blocked Eelam Tamils from obtaining citizenship and forced them to learn Sinhalese by declaring it the official language. As an important facet of cultural history, language is a common target in the oppression of Indigenous and minority groups. The laws discriminating against Eelam Tamils and the mounting tensions between ethnic groups triggered the Sri Lankan Civil War, giving rise to anti-Tamil pogroms.



In 1981, a Sinhalese mob burned down Jaffna Public Library, which was, at the time, one of the biggest libraries in Asia, containing over 97,000 volumes of irreplaceable cultural records. The burning is now widely considered to be one of the most violent examples of ethnic biblioclasm, or book burning, in world history. This was done as both a display of power and a means to eradicate written records of Eelam Tamil history. Eelam Tamils continue to be widely discriminated against in Sri Lanka, as their language, art, and culture is violated.



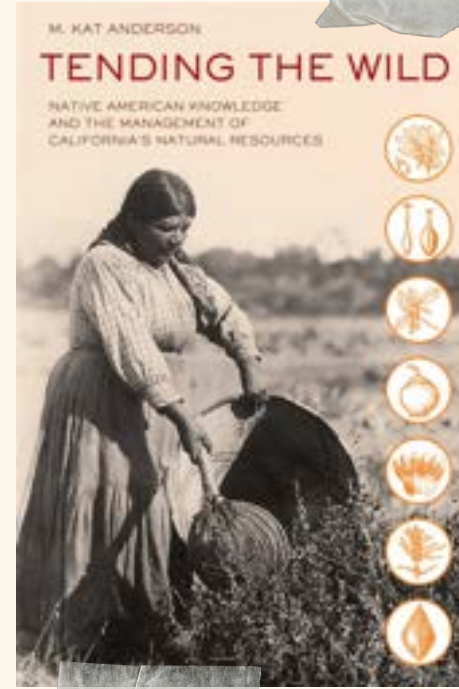
"Solana Beach and Lake Arrowhead, or Kumeyaay and Yuhaaviatam land? Adventuring through SoCal, you are trekking on land that is not yours. Colonialism is inherently an environmental issue, rooted in depleting resources and disrupting ecosystems. Among Indigenous communities, a large effect of colonialism is the generational dispossession of traditional ecological knowledge"



"Today, Indigenous populations continue to bear the brunt of climate change, pollution, and exposure to environmental hazards. Sustainability efforts worldwide will always be incomplete without the input and guidance of Indigenous voices. Acknowledging the land you stand on is a starting point to make an active effort to support Indigenous communities and address environmental issues in an inclusive and truly sustainable way."

photography and remarks by Raina Agnihotri

ADDITIONAL READING SPOTLIGHT



"Indigenous land management techniques are not only a useful tool, but one that is absolutely essential for successful restoration. Native people have lived in America for 25,000 years and in this time have learned from and coevolved with flora and fauna in every region of the Americas. It was noted by the first colonizers who came to America how endless and abundant the resources in America appeared to be."



photo from Tending the Wild

"Without the cultural and agricultural practices of native people in California, the cornucopia of species and habitats that exist would not be nearly as vibrant and diverse as we know them to be today. Indigenous cultures are completely intertwined with the ecology of their regions, so it is necessary to manage land in cooperation with indigenous people in order to maintain and restore ecological health."



submission and remarks from Wyatt Murphy

We understand that settler colonialism is an ongoing reality for Indigenous communities. Simply ending apartheid states does not reclaim Indigenous culture, land, and history. Because the United States government has complete trusteeship over Indigenous reservations, those living on reservations cannot reap the economic benefits of owning land. Buffalo slaughter and the introduction of alcohol by settlers on Turtle Island in the 1820s have compounded into drastic rates of alcoholism and psychological trauma within these communities today. Native populations have seen great economic benefits from oil drilling on reservations, but ongoing environmental efforts to reduce oil production have put reservations in a tough situation. In 2023, President Biden ordered a 20-year ban on oil and gas drilling around Chaco Culture National Historical Park. Though the site is a sacred hub for Indigenous civilization for nations in the Southwest, the Navajo nation was anticipating economic prosperity from this drilling effort. Native communities incorporated into larger settler empires are forced to choose between surviving in capitalist economics and Indigenous cultural preservation. No matter what, Indigenous nations are asked to make sacrifices regarding their sovereignty and control of ancestral lands.

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AS A COLONIAL SHADOW



SOUTH AFRICA, CAPE TOWN - APRIL 19, 2017: The township of Khayelitsha in Cape Town. (Photo by Frédéric Soltan/Corbis via Getty Images)

PARALLEL: Food insecurity due to drought in Tigray after civilian massacres by Eritrea and Ethiopia. "The conflict left thousands dead and displaced millions in Tigray" (Two years of Ethiopia's Tigray conflict: A timeline - Al Jazeera)

In post-apartheid South Africa, environmental racism continues to be a pervasive issue that disproportionately affects marginalized communities. While the emergence of South Africa's democracy marked a turning point in the effort to mitigate environmental contamination, the legacy of apartheid's economic and social disparities persist, and environmental disparities remain deeply entrenched as a result. The aftermath of apartheid's spatial planning has left many Black South Africans in densely populated townships and informal settlements, often located near industrial zones and waste sites. These areas suffer from significant pollution, leading to severe health issues such as respiratory diseases and cancers. The mining industry, a major economic driver, has left a trail of toxic waste and contaminated water supplies, **again disproportionately impacting Black communities**. Government institutions' inability to actively and transparently oversee corporate practices frequently hampered efforts to address these environmental hazards. As in the case of Indigenous communities in the United States, South Africans face the difficult balance between economic survival and environmental justice.

Recognizing environmental racism as an ongoing stain of imperial empires is crucial for fostering equitable solutions and advocating for marginalized communities. The emergence of strong environmental justice movements over the last decade gives researchers hope for a more environmentally equitable future, but achieving so requires a concerted effort to shift from rhetoric to action.



As we reflect on the stories shared in this issue and conclude our exploration of the intricate relationships between indigeneity, colonization, and the environment, we are compelled to ask: *Where do we go from here? How do we move beyond awareness to action in pursuit of collective liberation?* This final chapter serves as a call to action, offering both individual and community-based strategies to contribute to the decolonization movement and environmental justice.

Support indigenous-owned businesses and artisans, particularly those practicing sustainable and traditional methods.

New York City:
Relative Arts NYC
Stick Stone & Bone
Urban Indigenous Collective

Washington DC / DMV:
Abunai
Mitsitam Native Foods Cafe

Southern California:
XTiosu Kitchen
NSRGNTS
Urban Native Era

Northern California:
Wahpepah's Kitchen
Seka Hills
Cafe Ohlone

Online/Universal:
Sage and Oats
By Yellowtail
Trickster Company
Eighth Generation

Amplify Indigenous voices and perspectives on social media, in your personal networks, and in public discourse

@adam.rouhana is a Palestinian photographer who shares his country through a lens of beauty and culture over trauma and terror.

@dineaesthetics is a creative and trans-femme who frequently advocates for the trans community and joy.

@kararoses is a writer, model, and activist who uses her platform to talk about wellness, race, the environment, and more

@mia.khin.boe is an emerging painter whose work explores the idea of cultural disinheritance, seeking to record and recover Indigenous histories in her practice,

@moju_music is a musician whose art speaks to their experience as a queer, Wiradjuri and Filipino person.

COMMUNITY-BASED ACTION ITEMS

Advocate for climate policies that prioritize indigenous sovereignty, land repatriation, and environmental protection at the local, national, and international levels.

Collaborate with indigenous elders, activists, and traditional knowledge keepers to develop community-based climate adaptation and resilience strategies.

Engage in solidarity actions with communities impacted by climate change and environmental degradation, including protests, marches, and direct actions.

Advocate for inclusive and culturally sensitive environmental education in schools and community programs, highlighting Indigenous perspectives and contributions.



Foster dialogue and cultural exchange with indigenous communities, respecting their sovereignty and self-determination.

Educate your friends, family, and colleagues about the intersections of colonization, climate change, and indigenous rights.

Engage in self-reflection and continuous learning about your own privilege and complicity in systems of oppression.



FURTHER READING & RESEARCH

"Our Struggles are Your Struggles: Stories of Indigenous Resistance & Regeneration," Upstream Podcast, [Podcast]

"History in flames: Remembering the Burning of Jaffna Library," Tamil Guardian, [Article]

"Law, Indigeneity, and Climate Justice," Julian Aguon, [Lecture]

"How 'modern-day slavery' in the Congo powers the rechargeable battery economy," Sam Briger and Joel Wolfram for NPR, [Article]

"Poet Warrior," Joy Harjo, [Book]

"Guests in our own homes: The forest tribe of India's Himalayas," Devyani Nighoskar for Al Jazeera, [Article]

"Indigenous people are the world's biggest conservationists, but they rarely get credit for it," Benji Jones for Vox, [Article]

"Somos Raizes," Edivan Guajajara for If Not Us Then Who?, [Documentary]

"The Olive Branch," Willow Defebaugh for Atmos, [Article]

"Impacts of Environmental Racism through Generations," Matthew Mills, [Lecture]



By committing to continuous learning, action, and solidarity, we can build a world that honors Indigenous sovereignty, restores ecological balance, and fosters justice for all beings. Together, we can create the future we envision—one rooted in resilience, reciprocity, and respect for the land and its people.

For direct links to these works and access to our living document featuring an ever-growing list of resources and further reading, visit decolonizationdialogues.cargo.site/resources