Radical Pedagogy of Place:
A Decolonial Feminist Narrative Exploration of Returning, Organizing, and Resisting

by

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Abstract

This dissertation, set in the struggle against settler colonial modes of control, examines Asian racialization, (im)migrant settlerhood, and place-making through a transnational perspective. I focus on my personal experience with migration and the specific place-based knowledge and practices of Taiwanese Indigenous and Asian migrant communities. Following a decolonial feminist methodology, I devise the act of "returning," both in the metaphorical and physical sense, as a key method in exploring questions of place, identity, and resistance.

As such, in this work, I first situate my own lived experiences in and with multiple places through memory-based reflection as the method of returning. In this, I also offer an analysis, with the framework of border imperialism, of migration and mobility, arguing that migration is not about free choice to move but mobilized through global capitalism and colonialism through mechanisms such as racialization, border rules, and citizenship. Second, I give an account of my journey of physically returning to my birthplace, Taiwan. Through reconnecting with Taiwan and my family, I come to realize the settler colonial reality of Taiwan as a nation state and our family's position as Han settlers. Therefore, I present a framing of Taiwan and its struggle over place and identity in the context of the complex layers of settler colonial capitalist structures created through Taiwan's specific history. Specifically, I highlight the important place-based resistance of the Indigenous community Kucapungane in Rinari Township in Southern Taiwan. As a displaced community due to the colonial government's disaster response measure, Kucapungane created a tourism program that reverses the consumeristic nature of tourism, teaching the settlers and visitors about their struggle, their land, and stories on their own terms. Lastly, I reflect on my involvement as a community organizer working with an intergenerational coalition of Asian seniors and youth fighting back gentrification and anti-Asian racism in Vancouver's Chinatown, and how we learn to align our organizing with Indigenous struggle. We learn that to decolonize our resistance work, we need to reclaim our own humanity and cultural resources by establishing intergenerational relationships and knowledge exchange, finding joy and empowerment in such communal experiences.

Viewed as a suite of theoretical and empirical explorations, my experiences with and in these different places reveal that when we engage critically and intimately with place history, knowledge, and the collective imagination of what a just and flourishing future looks like, a pedagogy emerges. I call this a "radical pedagogy of place" which emphasizes the inseparable relationship between people and place. It reveals that the deeply place-based practices and knowledge hold the potential to transform the ways in which Asian communities build collectivity and solidarity around the world. To see pedagogy in this light shows the essentiality of education in our day-to-day political struggles and the political nature of our everyday lives. Pedagogy is not limited to an approach to teaching in the traditional schooling sense. Instead, we should recognize that pedagogy is present and a necessary component in the practice of liberation.

Keywords: radical pedagogy of place, place-based education, decolonization, community organizing, decolonial feminism, Asian racialization

Dedication

僅將本論文獻給

To my mother,

from whom I learned both softness and strength

我的母親，

她讓我懂得一個柔和的人，也可以同時堅韌有力

To Mr. William Lim,

for we will keep carrying on the torch of struggle

林青華爺爺，

我們反抗的腳步將永不停歇

To Tangerine,

for all the inspiration and love you filled in me enough to last a lifetime

子惠，

她給予我的啟發和愛，**足**夠我受用終身

&

To all my movement ancestors, mentors, friends, and those who believe a different tomorrow is possible.

所有運動中的前輩，良師，益友，以及相信未來可以不一樣的夥伴們。

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Land Acknowledgement

This land acknowledgement will be done in my mother's language and the language of our organizing in Chinatown.

我想鳴謝我們是在瑪斯昆 (Musqueam)、史戈米殊(Squamish)和塔斯里爾-沃特斯(Tsleil-Waututh)這些西岸原住民族從來沒有同意交出的領土上。作為移民，身處這片被偷走的土地之上，驅使我的並非是對加拿大這個殖民國家的責任感，而是對原住民爭取自治權&土地權鬥爭的關切。ta 們的鬥爭與我們的鬥爭彼此相連。

This land acknowledgement was written and was always read out loud in unison in our organizing meetings with the low-income Chinese seniors in Vancouver's Chinatown. In this acknowledgement, we say we give thanks out loud to be on the traditional territories of the Musqeam, Squmish and Tslei-Watuth nations, territories that have never been given up. We give this land acknowledgement to indicate that as (im)migrants on stolen Indigenous land, our allegiance is not with the colonial Canadian state, but with the Indigenous struggle for self-determination and land back. It is a recognition that our struggles are intrinsically connected, and we have an inherent responsibility and indebtedness to the host nations and to this land. As a newcomer and an organizer, learning to be in this new place and grappling with what it means to fight against anti-Asian racism and fighting for housing justice while being on stolen Indigenous land become part of our collective question and journey. It is in this context I come to the work in this dissertation.

Notes of Gratitude

As I stated in the dissertation, although this work is written through my own personal storytelling, it is profoundly collective. This has been a journey of ten years and I have received so much love and support along the way. I would not be where I am or who I am without the communities that have held me. I am forever changed by them.

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“Freedom is a place.” – Ruth Gilmore Wilson

Chapter 1. A Decolonial Feminist Journey

As a transient person, growing up, I never really thought about the question of "place." My mother and I moved from Taiwan to Belize when I was thirteen so that I could learn English, with the intention that one day we would make our way to the First World. I eventually went to Mexico to get a degree and begin my teaching career. In 2013, I came to Canada for graduate school. The plan for each place was never to stay.

A year after arriving in Canada, I had the opportunity to be part of the research with a buildingless outdoor public elementary school that emphasizes place-based education and cultivating connection with students' local places and the natural world. That was the first time I started seriously considering the centrality of "place." As a newcomer to this land, I was quite unsure of how I could connect with this strange place and strange land, but I was open to learn and be changed. I recall, on my first day of fieldwork, that when we arrived at one of the locations where the school holds their program I was jolted into awe by the fog-covered temperate rain forest. I approached a magnificent Douglas fir, feeling as if I was asking and being asked for an introduction. This was a place, a landscape that I had never encountered, as well as a school system and culture that I was not at all familiar with. I would spend the next two years as a researcher observing, shadowing, participating in the school, and this forest would become a teacher, a friend, and a refuge.

Being a researcher of colour and an immigrant woman drew my attention to many assumptions that others in the school may not have needed to think about, and it gave me a different perspective and experience with the school. I believed that the unconventional educational approach of the school project challenged the idea of what formal education can look like and accomplish, as I observed a school community becoming empowered by tapping into the knowledge the community held as well as becoming connected with their local ecologies (Ho & Block, 2016). On the other hand, I also had some complicated feelings and saw gaps that ultimately became the beginning of my inquiry. One of my first observations was that the school lacked students of different racial backgrounds. It is important to consider the levels of privilege that afford one the opportunity to attend an unconventional schooling system. For many immigrants like myself, being unconventional can feel dangerous to our survival.

Furthermore, I sensed there was a particular way of being in the outdoors promoted in the school that centered white masculinity. Besides the occasional microaggressive comments, I had to constantly prove myself even though I was also just learning the land at the same time. In one of the first school hikes that I participated in, one of the male teachers said to me, “Are you going to hike in those shoes, missy?” I felt looked down on, and that my own experience with nature was never considered (Ho & Tham, 2021). In Belize, we often hiked in muddy humid jungle with just a pair of flip-flops because those were what was available. Here in the school, I felt there was an outdoor uniform, and I was not informed of it. The idea of “outdoor uniform” connects to the colonial imaginary of the outdoors and who should have access to it. On glancing at popular outdoor store or outdoor gear ads, one can observe that the majority of the advertisements feature fit-looking white men and women smiling in unaffordable gear with the natural world as backdrop or something to be conquered, commodified, or, possibly, protected.

It is important to point out that the natural world does not exclude cultural assumptions. I recall that, in the first month being at the school, I was introduced to the children’s fort village, an area in the forest where the students had been building forts with materials they had gathered from the land. I was welcomed into the village by a few second and third graders. They gave me a tour of the village, showing me where each group’s forts were, as well as some of the publicly used forts. The students took me to one of the forts and pointed out that this is where the older kids would put the children who didn’t behave. On our tour, they would also get distracted whenever they encountered tree cones. They would say to me, “You can use these to buy more sticks to build your fort.” In their play, the children had replicated a carceral and monetary system that resembled the capitalist society we live in. I saw that how a place is encountered is deeply connected to larger systems. “Nature” is not a neutral ecological category but rather a socially constructed space that can reproduce “broader hegemonic societal relations of the time” (Youdelis et al., 2020, p. 233).

One last piece of reflection centers on Indigeneity and decolonization. I began to observe a plethora of Indigenous practices integrated in the school’s pedagogical practices with an almost all white student population. Without a proper critical discussion of colonialism and the role of settlers, these practices ran the danger of being appropriative and committing what Tuck and Yang (2012) call the “settler move to

innocence”—a positioning that avoids settler responsibilities in the discussion and process of returning land and giving up power. The adoption of Indigenous practices and knowledge without grappling with the history and present of colonialism perpetuates the continuation of Indigenous erasure (Smith, 1999).

Around the same time I was doing research in the school, I also started volunteering as a community organizer in Vancouver’s Chinatown, working with an intergenerational group of Chinese immigrants to push back on the ongoing racism and displacement caused by gentrification. I was welcomed into the community and began to learn about the history of working-class Chinese immigrants and their connection to Chinatown as a place of safety and survival. Through this way of relating to Chinatown, my view of it changed. I no longer understood it to be merely a site of profit-driven development and a tourist destination that promotes an orientalist view of Chinese culture. I experienced first-hand that culture is not static but lived, that the meanings of a place are inseparable from the people who are there, and that history is complex and layered. In the course of this work with the seniors of Chinatown and other organizers, we came to see that our history of struggle was not separated from other struggles, especially the Indigenous struggle. Chinatown is situated on the traditional, unceded land of the Squamish Nation, an area known as Luq’luq’i, and is also adjacent to the Downtown Eastside neighbourhood where many urban Indigenous people reside. Learning about these relationships has pushed us, as Chinese immigrants, to question how our fight for belonging in this colonial country has been predicated on the displacement and eradication of Indigenous people.

Related themes emerge whenever I teach about place-based education and our responsibility to the places we are in. I often get questions from other international or immigrant students about how we can care for a place that is temporary to us, or that has not been kind to us, or that we don’t feel we belong to, and what exactly our responsibilities are to the Indigenous people of the place? These are the same questions I asked when I first started engaging in place-based education and practices; they suggest that a deeper exploration of these issues may benefit people who hold similar positionality. And as poet Cathy Park Hong (2021) alludes, there are simply not enough stories about people like us, so we don’t know ourselves as our own people. Rather than another story of “model minority” or “American dream,” there is a need for an account of

the honest journey of someone who has struggled with place, identity, responsibility and belonging.

These early experiences and questions have pushed me to center “place” in my inquiry. This means looking beyond the dominant definition of a place to the hidden and marginalized relationships, practices and knowledges held by people and places. This way of connecting with places at the grassroots, a practice of radical relationship building with place, has taught me that I have not come to “Vancouver, BC”; rather, I have arrived on Coast Salish lands that hold histories of flourishing, survival, displacement, violence and struggle that concern each person who comes to this land and implicate all of us in their ongoing story. This is a reorientation of our relationship as newcomers to this land, and it echoes the question Rita Wong (2008) asks: “What happens if we position Indigenous people’s struggles instead of normalized whiteness as the reference point through which we come to articulate our subjectivity?” (p.158). For me, this radical reorientation calls us to question critically the larger rhetoric of inclusion and belonging through nationalistic immigration processes built on settler colonial logics (Toomey et al., 2021). Belonging and inclusion look for a seat at the table; they do not question the stability of the table or who set up the table. Instead, I want to focus on reorienting towards connection and responsibility—a relationship to place that centers on building accountability to and reciprocity with land and Indigenous people.

This reorientation not only transformed the way I relate to my current place, but it also propelled me into a deep reflection on my relationships with the places I have been. This took me on both a metaphorical and physical journey into my past. I revisited my memories as a young person immigrating to the Caribbean, and I also traveled back physically to my birthplace, Taiwan, to re-encounter the land and people that I come from. Through this journey, I not only developed profound new relationships and understanding within these places, but I also learned how each set of place experiences and relationships connects and informs the others, in a way that has been critical in helping me make sense of the world and how to take action in it. Rather than undertaking research in the traditional sense, I was taking on the feminist call to re-search—re-searching and remembering my past, my positionality, and the places where I have come to be.

Taken together, this set of experiences and reflections makes up this dissertation. It is a journey, an inquiry, and a call to action. At the very centre is a big and complex question that is still being answered, not just by me personally but by a whole collective of people who believe a different tomorrow is possible. This question asks: what accountability and responsibility do we hold, personally and collectively, to move beyond the colonial and capitalist order that has defined and marginalized many of our lives? I come to this question through my own personal experience as an immigrant and a daughter to an immigrant mother, as well as a migrant student, a woman of colour, a settler, an educator, and an organizer. I hope to add to this conversation not through a focus on how these systems have defined us, but rather on how people have flourished and resisted—particularly by paying attention to place-based relationships, practices and wisdom that have existed despite or against these systems of oppression.

The process of developing wisdom through these relationships and practices is what I call a radical pedagogy of place. Such a pedagogy emerges through people engaging critically and intimately with the history and present of a place and the collective imagination of what a just and flourishing future looks like. Radical pedagogy of place emphasizes the inseparable relationship between people and place and the deeply place-based practices and knowledge that make their struggle liberating. I draw on Leanne Betasamosake Simpson's use of "radical" in the sense of coming from the roots—not only to examine the root cause of systemic oppression, but also to go to the roots from where the vitality of resistance and survival comes (Simpson, 2017, p. 48). Often this work takes place outside of institutions of formal education, and requires practitioners collectively to elevate, imagine and live out an alternative space that defies the present order. Through learning from these place-based stories, one can begin to see a radical pedagogy of place that has the transformative potential to create a space for reimagination and foster commitment to decolonization work. To name this process as *pedagogy* is to affirm the essentiality of education in our day-to-day political struggles and the political nature of our everyday lives. Pedagogy is not limited to teaching in the traditional schooling sense; pedagogy is present and a necessary component in the practice of liberation.

Critical pedagogue Henry Giroux (1992) emphasizes that pedagogy is "a form of political and cultural production deeply implicated in the construction of knowledge, subjectivities, and social relations" (p.2). Put more plainly, pedagogy is a set of various

practices that “seek to engage the processes through which people understand themselves and the ways in which they engage others and their environments” (p.3). Transformation is at the heart of this way of understanding pedagogy, as well as intervention in and disruption of the epistemological and ontological manipulation of capital and colonial control. Part of reorientating ourselves to the practice of liberation is to pay attention to the crucial pedagogical element that is present. Education should be a practice of liberation, but practices of liberation (movement building, organizing, etc.) should also be a process of education as well. In particular, regarding the issues central to my own research, pedagogy is always present in our struggles and relationships in and with place.

This work is both personal and profoundly collective. Through my own personal experiences living in different places throughout my life, and my commitment to be part of the struggle against dispossession, displacement, and exploitation of people and the natural world, I aim to bring attention to the intimate transnational aspects of such struggles, the impacts of emplaced/displaced experiences, and broader questions of migration, identity, and power. However, given the individual nature of the first-person narrative style of the dissertation, I want to emphasize that none of the reflections would be possible without the communities that I have been in. My own empowerment is hinged on the empowerment of the communities. This work is not just about individual responsibilities, but it is about how we can be, act and heal together to prevent further colonial and capitalist encroachment. As Harsha Walia so aptly emphasizes, “There is no liberation in isolation” (Walia, 2013, p. 3).

Theoretical threads of connection

Black feminist bell hooks, whose work has had a life-changing influence on me, describes theory as having the potential to be a place of healing, a sanctuary to make sense of what is happening and to reimagine possible futures (hooks, 1994). In very large part, I owe my journey to the theorizing and teachings of black feminists, feminists of colour, Indigenous writers and activists, other scholars of colour, and movement mentors and friends. They have offered me a safe harbour and the ability and courage to name my experiences. They have given me a language, a bridge to stand on to call out the embodied and emplaced effects of colonialism and capitalism and to see my situated conditions in connection to the global context. I first learned many of these theories in

the academic sense. Academia has offered me tools and a space to interrogate and reflect on the world around me; however, these theories truly come alive and continue to grow in me when I see how they are lived on the ground through the praxis of community and movement building. Therefore, at an overall theoretical level, this dissertation is guided by the principles and thoughts of black feminists, feminists of colour, and anti-colonial and decolonization scholarship, as well as the everyday emergent lived theories that are grounded in place-specific realities and struggles.

I came to feminism, particularly the writings of Black feminists, women of colour and transnational/Third World feminists, in my mid-twenties when I started my graduate study. I immediately gravitated towards the work of bell hooks (hooks, 1984; 1989; 1990; 1994; 2003; 2009). She dispelled the reductionist myth that feminism is only a space for women and expanded the understanding of feminism to be about a commitment to loosen the grip of “imperialist white supremacist capitalist heteropatriarchy”. She offered not only an analysis that shows the clear connection between different systems of oppression, but she made it easier for the rest of us to be able to do this work by unapologetically sharing her life, her struggle, her joy and her sadness. For me, this was an empowering example and a permission to also speak and name my own experiences and senses of place.

bell hooks helped me understand the meaning of “the personal is political” and gave me the courage to face and embrace my own layered lived experiences as a racialized woman and as an immigrant, and to locate my own sense of place to make clear where I am coming from when I articulate my struggle. Our experiences as women of colour direct our political consciousness and open us up to the possibility of liberation politics. Through this lens, we can embrace the non-linearity of our lives. I learn from incredible feminist ancestors and mentors, not just scholars but people in the community—people who have been honest and genuine in how they live their lives so that we can learn from the messiness of it all. They have taught me to recognize that we must not define the margin in terms of oppressive structures; rather, it is a place of “radical opening and possibility” (hooks, 1990, p. 22).

For me feminism of colour has created the foundation for thinking through the present oppressive reality and act together, not only to end it but also to imagine what an alternative looks like and to see connections that may not be explicit. Our interconnected

struggles means that, to be free, all of us must be free. When I first learned of intersectionality, one of the core tenets of the work of Black feminism, I instantly understood its importance and its relevance to my own experiences as a queer working-class Asian woman. Intersectionality emphasizes the overlapping and multiple impacts of oppressions and identities and helps to counter white feminism's avoidance of race and the racial experiences of marginalized women. Angela Davis takes this even further, emphasizing the intersectionality of struggles—"to see connection where it is not apparent" (Davis, 2016), to understand the connection between struggles in different places transnationally. For example, Davis connects the struggles in the US and in Palestine through the militarization of the police. In a way, my study involves seeing the connection of the global capitalist and colonial projects through examining transnational and migratory lives in particular places: specifically, how global capitalism depends on colonial structures and apparatus to advance, and the real material, ethical and social consequences of this reality.

The writings of Third World feminists have also been pivotal in connecting transnational struggles. Cherríe Moraga writes that "to view the world today through a feminist of color lens shatters all barriers of state-imposed nationality" (Moraga & Anzalda, 2015, p. xvi). To see through this lens is to see the complex intersectionality of our lives as people on the margin, and through that intersectionality, the connectedness of all struggles. It is an attitude of humility, but not the humility that is imposed by patriarchal rules, such as in my own culture, that shut down women and non-binary people to make more space for men. This is a sense of humility that fosters deep listening and relating, without assuming that one can ever fully understand and speak for others' lived experiences. The feminist of color vision creates a solidarity that is not based on a simplistic and essentialist view of identity or "sisterhood," but on "mutuality, accountability, and the recognition of common interests as the basis for relationship among diverse communities" (Moraga & Anzalda, 2015, p.7). It creates an "imagined community" that share a strong "horizontal comradeship" situated in people's particular places. Chandra Talpade Mohanty explains:

> The idea of imagined community is useful because it leads us away from essentialist notions of Third World feminist struggles, suggesting political rather than biological or cultural bases for alliance. It is not color or sex that constructs the ground for these struggles. Rather, it is the way we think about race, class, and gender—the political links we choose to make

> among and between struggles. Thus, potentially, women of all colors (including white women) can align themselves with and participate in these imagined communities. However, clearly our relation to and centrality in particular struggles depend on our different, often conflictual, locations and histories (Mohanty, 2003, p. 46).

In this way, feminism of colour is fundamentally anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and decolonial in principle. Our situated lives are the fertile ground for theorizing and analysis.

Another group of feminists that also influenced my thinking around struggle, liberation, and interconnecting experiences of oppression was the ecofeminists (Shiva & Mies, 1993; Plumwood, 2002; Gaard, 2011; Piersol & Timmerman, 2017; Foster, 2021). Ecofeminism connects women's struggle with the exploitation of the natural world by pointing out the shared root cause that is patriarchal colonial capitalism. For example, Vandana Shiva states that in the process of capitalist patriarchy, "nature, women, and non-white people merely provide 'raw' material. The devaluation of contributions from women and nature goes hand-in-hand with the value assigned to acts of colonization as acts of development and improvement" (Shiva & Mies, 1993, p. 25). Although their discussions of women and nature have garnered strong criticism for essentializing experience of being women and universalizing the relationship between women and nature (Moore, 2015), I do not want to discount their important contribution in making clear how the struggle for human liberation is intrinsically tied to the liberation of the natural world, if, indeed, our goal is to stop colonial capitalist exploitation and violence. This intersectional lens continues to remind me not to background the important connection we have to land, place, and other living beings.

bell hooks has also connected relationship to land to the work of dismantling racism and colonial domination (hooks, 2009). For her growing up in agrarian Kentucky, nature was a sanctuary from racial oppression. bell hooks recalls the important history of Black agrarian past and Black intimacy with the land, that land facilitated their senses of freedom, belonging, and wholeness. She contends that racism that drives many Black folks to the North into the cities by taking away and not granting land owning rights to Black people has had devastating consequences to Black communal life and spirituality. Therefore, for bell hooks, an important component of Black liberation, healing, and decolonization is to reclaim this history and this connection to land as it shows the fundamental intimacy between land and oppressed people who might be divided and separated by racial hierarchy.

If feminism provides me a lens to see, then decolonization is the vision. Tuck & Yang (2012) argue that the goals of social justice and decolonization are different, and therefore we must not co-opt the language of decolonization into social justice goals. However, I argue that in a settler colonial nation such as Canada, as well as in the current global "re-colonization through capitalism" (Mohanty, 2003), we must understand how colonialism advances and manifests itself through social injustices that are perpetrated according to race, gender, class, sexual orientation, ability and so on. One of the most important lessons I have learned from the framework of decolonization, as I shared earlier, is to re-orient the positionality of immigrants to align with Indigenous decolonization struggles and to expose the state-manufactured belonging and dependency on settler colonial logic that aim to perpetuate colonial control.

This is a humbling way to relate to the land I have arrived on, teaching me to offer gratitude and to assume my responsibility to the care of this land. This framework also offers pedagogical opportunities to examine the "material consequences of aligning oneself with the settler state" (Phung, 2015, p. 58), as well as the potential to open up space for solidarity down to the most practical details. This vision has helped me feel less alone and that our immigrant history and resistance is also a form of solidarity with everyone else—we are no longer just one group of people fighting for what is good for us, but we are deeply implicated in each other's struggle and survival. For me that is liberating. Harsha Walia (2013) explains that as a vision decolonization is not about creating something completely new but recognizing that we are grounded in the inheritance of "generations of evolving wisdom about living freely and communally while stewarding the Earth from anticolonial communing practices, anti-capitalist worker cooperatives, [to] anti-oppressive communities of care…" (p.11). I feel excitement at taking up this commitment and learning with my community politically, personally, and collectively. In learning from all the diverse ways different communities have been enacting their own decolonial practices, we find ways of moving forward that depend less and less on the settler colonial state.

In the context of this work, paying attention to place becomes crucial and urgent (Boggs, 2015; Calderon, 2014; Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; Dirlik, 1999; hooks, 2009; McKittrick, 2006; Tuck et al., 2014). Specifically, the formation and reinforcement of place meanings through the interactions of place with culture, politics, and history can expose the situated realities of colonial and capitalist expansion: for example,

encroaching gentrification, land theft in the name of economic benefits, as well as border issues and control of movement. At the same time, it also brings crucial place-based practices to the forefront of countering the dominant narrative. Indigenous scholars and organizers have long seen place-based practices, tied to the vitality of the land, as essential to their relationship and flourishing. Dene scholar Glen Coulthard argues that struggles around land are key to Indigenous anti-colonial and anti-capitalist efforts, not only in the material sense, but also for how such struggles can be "deeply informed by what the land as system of reciprocal relations and obligations can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 13). He conceptualizes this place-based underpinning of Indigenous anti-colonial work as "grounded normativity," a term referring to "the modalities of Indigenous land-connected practices and longstanding experiential knowledge that inform and structure [their] ethical engagement with the world and [their] relationships with human and nonhuman others over time" (p. 13). The practice of solidarity is also anchored in this place-based foundation (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016). In this present moment of further enclosure through state violence, colonial takeover through capitalist development, border control, and environmental degradation, there is a pressing need to build stronger "decolonial relations of place-based solidarity" (Day et al., 2019, p. 4).

To view place in this way requires us to question and go beyond the dominating definitions of a place—to understand that place is not neutral but entangled in complex social and power relations. In this sense, the understanding of place that undergirds this project draws on my own work that sees place through an interlocking set of "place anchors" (Ho, 2020). Following critical feminist and Black feminist geography traditions, I identified five "place anchors", namely space, land, mobility, power, and memory. These name interconnected elements and relationships that help reveal the layered identities of place and our situatedness therein. I use the metaphor "anchor" not to mean permanence or belonging, but to help us understand how our relationship, experiences, and perceptions of place can be enabled, shaped, and/or limited—that is, embedded within particular experiential and relational histories.

These place anchors need to be interrogated and understood in order to challenge the normative notion of a place. They exist and work contingently in tandem, and I believe there may be more place anchors that can be named. But I have named

this preliminary list as it offers important considerations and an entry point for us to reflect meaningfully on our engagements with place. On a personal level, they have also helped me examine my own positioning and commitments as I try to make sense of my own senses of place. As I reflect on and discuss different place-based narratives in this dissertation, this framework supports how I encounter, reflect, and unpack these experiences.

First, the understanding of place cannot be separated from the construction of space. Space, understood as the intersubjective zone between people in which shared communication and understanding can develop, is lived and co-constructed out of an interwoven set of relationships. bell hooks (2009) emphasizes that “spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed ….The appropriation and use of space are political acts” (p, 152-153). This way of understanding space provides a glimpse into how the hegemonic articulation of a given place can be disrupted through living and embodied dialogue, providing a radical opening to marginalized voices and positionalities. One way to approach my work is to see it as engaging with this understanding of space construction and its relationship to place. In the various place-based narratives, I am looking for ways to centre the agency of marginalized communities and to explore how they succeed in creating spaces that subvert the seemingly fixed identity of place.

Second, I situate place not just in the abstraction of sociality but also in the material and tangible land. This is part of the commitment to decolonization and understanding that land in the center of the struggle against colonial capitalism. Anchoring place in the physical land moves away from the colonial conceptualizations of place which see land as commodity to be reconfigured for the benefit of the settlers and capitalist gains. To consider this, I particularly appreciate the term *Xiang Tu* (鄉土) that some people in Taiwan use to describe their own situatedness with place (Ho & Chang, 2021). Xiang (鄉) connotes the people and community and tu (土), the soil, the land. *Xiang Tu* is an inseparable concept that describes the unbreakable connection between people and place. *Xiang Tu* connotes the diverse and complex relationships between land and its people, and it also turns away from the notion of a single, dominant understanding of place. Thinking about place through *Xiang Tu* helps my commitment of decolonization as it reminds me that the land is never empty. It counters the colonial

narrative of *terra nullius*. It centers on the reciprocal relational aspect of people and land. It also sharpens my place intuition and helps me overcome the limitations of the English word “place” that does not describe all of the diverse ways of relating to place.

The understanding of place cannot do without an interrogation of power. Place is often seen as a neutral category and different place articulations can be treated simply as competing narratives of place identity. However, an analysis of how power is being upheld through place formation can help us connect seemingly disconnected place articulations to understand how we can properly intervene at the root. Black geographer Katherine McKittrick (2006) demonstrates that dominant geographic structures are organized around oppressive hierarchies. This spatial arrangement of difference naturalizes identity and place, assigning non-dominant groups to where they “naturally” belong. Through this ostensibly “neutral” narrative, the displacement of difference rationalizes spatial boundaries and portrays many bodies as being “out of place” (2006, p. xv). As McKittrick points out, “this displacement of difference does not describe human hierarchies but rather demonstrates the ways in which these hierarchies are critical categories of social and spatial struggle” (p. xv). Following this, in this work I pay special attention to experiences of “out-of-placeness” as indicators of ways in which power relations are being transmitted through dominant place narratives.

Furthermore, in my previous exploration I paid attention to mobility as one of the essential place anchors. In part, my aim was to demonstrate that place is not fixed and stagnant, but its construction is fluid and ever-changing. However, in this present work understanding mobility also centres the question of whose sense of or relationship to place is marginalized and denied due to varying degrees of forced migration, exploitation, and limited freedom of movement. To explore this dimension of place identity, I tap into my memory-world to highlight my own experiences as a migratory body under the influences of global capitalism and Western imperial power.

Finally, memory is central to making sense of place. First, the invocation of memories often takes on specific spatial formations. Place is a contested zone of memories with some being actively erased, marginalized, and silenced. Which memories get to be celebrated and remembered is indicative of forms of control that impose “a deep silence which must be continually broken” (hooks, 2009, p. 176). A few years ago I went to a panel discussion on the role of Vancouver’s Punjabi Market and Chinatown in

the construction and erasure of civic memory. One of the panelists, Puneet Singh, explained that if one visits the neighbourhood of Kitsilano today, they find no trace of the once vibrant South Asian community there. Historic neighbourhoods such as the Punjabi Market and Chinatown in Vancouver, once designated for people of colour, are rapidly being gentrified and reconstructed. For marginalized communities, it is not only places of dwelling that are under threat, but memories of those places, and by extension the living continuity of existence (Paneet Singh, Personal Communication, July 8, 2017). By the same token, however, memory can be a powerful site of resistance (hooks, 2009). In this work, I aim to uncover and highlight important place memories as essential elements in the process of radical pedagogy of place. I also invoke memory and remembering as a central element of my methods for this re-search.

Returning and remembering as method

Naturally, the theoretical foundation in transnational feminism, feminism of colour, ecofeminism, decolonization, and place theories described above also sets the foundation of my methodological approach. Angela Davis contends that feminism is not a theory merely about gendered bodies, but it is "an approach—a way of conceptualizing, as a methodology, as a guide to strategies for struggle," and it presses us to "develop understandings of social relations, whose connections are often initially only intuited" (2016, p. 142). This intuitive space is important to this methodology as it holds that "human agency is powerful and transformative" (Falcón, 2016, p. 175), and for me this agency includes agency of "place" and our inseparable relationship to it. Chicana feminist scholar Dolores Calderon (2014), unpacking her commitment to anti-colonialism, emphasizes that it has to start with place because place holds the story of colonial logic, specifically settler colonial structure; understanding this is an important step in decolonization. Second and more importantly, place is the embodiment of "the sacred, the histories of multiple communities, resistance and the legal landscapes of the borderlands" (p. 83).

The commitment to take decolonial feminist methodology into the field means challenging the harmful logic of existing Western research methodologies situated in colonial institutions. "From the vantage point of the colonized," Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) points out the damage done to Indigenous peoples and marginalized communities when research is designed and practiced as part of the colonial agenda.

She vehemently emphasizes that research can be a site of colonial perpetuation, establishing “formal rules…[and]…representations and ideological constructions of the Other in scholarly and ‘popular’ work” that are then mediated and disseminated through official history and institutional education (pp. 7-8). For this reason, research is a major site of struggle between different ways of knowing and being and the interests of the West and the Other. There is a need to articulate how the search for knowledge and knowledge construction is entrenched in the multiple layers of colonial practices and rules that manifest in research methodologies controlling the encounters of the West and the Other. Therefore, a commitment to decolonizing research is, in a sense, a commitment to breaking rules—breaking research conventions and rigid academic structures and creating new research praxis (Falcón, 2016). Smith calls this “researching back” (p. 7), a phrase which resonates with the tradition of “talking back” as articulated by bell hooks (1989):

> Moving from silence into speech is for the oppressed, the colonized, the exploited, and those who stand and struggle side by side a gesture of defiance that heals, that makes new life and new growth possible. It is that act of speech, of ‘talking back,’ that is no mere gesture of empty words, that is the expression of our movement from object to subject—the liberated voice (p.9).

Feminist scholar Sylvanna M. Falcón put together a working set of criteria for a transnational feminist research methodology that aims at decolonizing the process of knowledge production and moving away from the established institutional norms of research that continues to regulate and reproduce colonialism (Falcón, 2016). These criteria include: 1) negotiating imperial privileges, specifically in the consideration of making resource sharing reciprocal, the interview process more interactive and non-hierarchical, and placing community needs in the centre; 2) cultivating a research community as part of the research design so to resist an individualistic research agenda and honor collective knowledge production; 3) incorporating practices of multilingualism; and lastly 4) setting the foundation in liberatory practices that embrace a politics of vision, hope and love. These criteria may sound abstract, but they have deep implications in every stage of the research process. For me, to honour the foundation described so far, I called on “lived and storied methods” (Scherrer, 2022) that enable me to situate myself in place-specific stories, memories and lived experiences that have the potential to upset the dominant oppressive narratives and “signal a way of living beyond crisis” (Scherrer, 2022, p. 193). This mode of inquiry opens space for me to be intuitive

and flexible, as well as allowing emergent encounters to become part of the inquiry and honoring the non-linear nature of reflection and transformation.

One of the most central methods in my work is “returning”—both in the metaphorical and physical sense. Sara Ahmed (2016) posits that “feminist work is often memory work… [to] work to remember what sometimes we wish would or could recede” (p. 22). Ahmed describes this method as being like a sponge soaking up the past. It is not just about recalling what has been forgotten but “mopping up” the memories to make connection and clarity, to see a “fuller picture.” This is no easy task and comes with pain and discomfort that sometimes we don’t want to remember, but bell hooks encourages us to “bear the burden of memory… [to] willingly journey to places long uninhabited, searching the debris of history for traces of the unforgettable, all knowledge of which has been suppressed” (2009, p. 98). In exploring these places where voices have long been silenced, hooks invokes the phrase used in the movement against racial apartheid in South Africa, “*our struggle is also a struggle of memory against forgetting*” (hooks, 1990, p. 147).

In her own life, bell hooks returned to her childhood place, Kentucky, the Appalachians, for retirement. She recorded this return and the reflections that came with it in her book, *Belonging: A Culture of Place* (2009). The move forced her to face the painful memories of gender and racial violence and segregation that she escaped from, but also enabled her to remember the parts that grew her, sustained her, sheltered her, and shaped her. She asserts that “the past [is] a resource that can serve as a foundation for us to revision and renew our commitment to the present, to making a world where all people can live fully and well, where everyone can belong” (p.5). I decided to take up the same call and journey to my past places to draw from both the treasured memories and moments as well as some of the darker corners that I had avoided, in turn finding new connections and relationships. This journey was by no means simply chronological or linear. Beginning in the decolonization struggle in Vancouver’s Chinatown, it would take me back into the memories of my own immigrant story, as well as two years of journeying back and forth to my own birthplace, Taiwan.

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How bell hooks guided me to journey back to my past

In *belonging: a culture of place* (2009), bell hooks meditates on her decision to return to the land where she was born. She did not choose to make Kentucky home again from a sentimental place that romanticized her childhood as an "uncorrupted world"; rather, she saw it as a place of both possibility and terrors that nonetheless offered access to a true sense of belonging.

When I read this essay early on as an international graduate student, I was moved not just because of her deeply insightful reflection and her lived theories, but I felt she was speaking to me personally, encouraging me to carve a path back to my own past and the lived theory I too have been making. Here is how I imagine the conversation between me and bell hooks, a mentor I never met in person but who has forever transformed the way I take up my life.

1.

bell hooks:

"Kentucky hills were where my life began... freely roaming Kentucky hills in childhood, running from snakes and all forbidden outside terrors both real and imaginary, I learn to be safe in the knowledge that facing what I fear and moving beyond it will keep me secure.... Nature was the foundation of our counter hegemonic black sub-culture. Nature was the place of victory. In the natural environment everything had its place including humans.... There the dominant culture (the system of imperialist white supremacist capitalist patriarchy) could not wield absolute power."

jade:

Nature played the same role for me as a child and as an immigrant teen whose difference I tried to escape from. I experienced the wonder of the green grassland of Southern Taiwan, where I roamed, tumbled and received all kinds of bruises, free from having to behave as a submissive girl. In Belize, the creek behind the chicken company was where we were part of the ecology of the place. Our difference became strength and not an anomaly that needed to be erased.

2.

bell hooks:

"Yet it was my flight from Kentucky, my traveling all the way to the west coast, to California, that revealed to me the extent to which my sense and sensibility was deeply informed by the geography of place."

jade:

I've always wanted to escape my places. I wanted to leave Taiwan because what hope do I have in a non-English-speaking island? I wanted to leave Belize because what opportunity can this little third world country give me? I wanted to leave Chetumal because it doesn't even have a Starbucks. But I've never had such deep realization of how much these places have shaped me and informed me until I

moved to Canada and realized how much of my understanding, my feelings, my emotions are filtered by the places I have lived in.

3.

bell hooks:

"Living away from my native place I become more consciously Kentuckian than I was when I lived at home. This is what experience of exile can do, change your mind, utterly transform one's perception of the world of home."

jade:

I began to miss the places that I had wanted to escape. I began to embrace the many parts of me that were made by those places. For the longest time, I denied my Taiwanese culture so that I could be more Western. Then I hid my Belizeanness so that people would stop asking me "how can you be from Belize?" or "Belize must be a paradise right?" I became a chameleon adopting and assimilating to the accent and way of speaking, socializing, eating, greeting, but all the while this was showing me how much I am of my places. I began to regret how much I did not yet know about my places and the life I once had.

4.

bell hooks:

"Digging in the California ground my hands touched earth, that was so different from the moist red and brown dirt of Kentucky I felt awe.... Then I could not understand how the earth could be my witness in this strange land if it could not be a mirror in which I could see reflected the world of my ancestors, the landscape of my dreams. How could this new land hold me upright, provide me the certainty that the ground of my being was sound?"

jade:

Like bell hooks, when I first stepped foot in the coastal rainforest in Maple Ridge, I was in awe, but also in fear. I felt so out of place in a land that I did not know, yet because of this openness, I allowed the land to teach me. I learned that the land is welcoming and reciprocal. If you open to it, respect it, ask questions of it, you will find your responsibility in it. I felt embraced by the land where I have now come to be. I have also learned that this land holds history where my ancestors have been— a hidden, dark, and twisted history, but also a complicated story of how my ancestors were saved, accepted, helped by the land and the land's original stewards.

5.

bell hooks:

"As I experienced greater success as an intellectual and a writer, I felt I was constantly working to make my core truths have visibility and meaning in a world where the values and beliefs I wanted to make the foundation of my life had no meaning. Still and all, I did not feel that I could come home. The self I had invented in these other worlds seemed too unconventional for Kentucky, too cosmopolitan.... My visits home almost always left me torn: I wanted to stay but I needed to leave, to be endlessly running away from home."

jade:

Growing up I heard stories about children, whose parents had worked so hard to send them to school in the US, coming home feeling ashamed of their parents and their humble origin. I always detested those people, I felt they were so ungrateful and that I would not be one of them. I never imagined that my own alienation from my home would take shape in a different way, through my newfound political consciousness as well as my Western education. In the first year of my PhD, I encountered a Latinx scholar Richard Rodriguez. In his book *Hunger of Memory* (1982), he said, "If, because of my schooling, I had grown culturally separated from my parents, my education finally had given me ways of speaking and caring about the fact" (cited in Warnick, 2007, p. 60). I felt Rodriquez adequately pointing out the irony of our intellectual development. I started finding myself having more arguments and conflicts with my immigrant mother who holds beliefs I find problematic. For a while I lost the love of the home that had supported me in this development, so I became reluctant to go back or when I did go back, I was torn between lingering for the love of my mother and wanting to escape.

6.

bell hooks:

"Healing that spirit meant for me remembering myself, taking the bits and pieces of my life and putting them together again.... Making the connections between geographical location and psychological states of being was useful for me. It empowered me to recognize the serious dysfunctional aspect of the southern world I was raised in, the way internalized racism affected our emotional intelligence, our emotional life and yet it also revealed the positive aspect of my upbringing, the strategies of resistance that were life enhancing."

jade:

Have I taken the time to remember myself? What multiplicity of truths do my places hold? How can my places reveal to me how they are bound up in systems of oppression as well as with our own history and stories of resistance and survival? I know when I left Taiwan, I also left behind many detestable experiences of being a young girl there; when I left my mother's home, I let go of some of our shared stories of how we survived our journey together. It's time for me to start the journey back to my own Kentucky, my own journey of unlearning, relearning, reclaiming, and remembering. What is the legacy of pain and suffering that I left behind? What important celebratory and mundane beauties did I have to let go as a result of not-remembering?

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Story/storying/storytelling is another central method of this research. I grew up on stories told by my elders around me—my grandpa's stories of the Chinese civil war, my grandma's recounting of a time when the Japanese government ruled over their lives, my mom's adventures as a young woman in the last decade of martial-law Taiwan. I am made up by stories of those who are around me, the places I have been in, and I am a story maker of myself as well as a storyteller of the stories that have been ingrained in me. Story is a double-edged sword—it can be constructed and used to dominate, but it can also be a form of powerful resistance to this domination. We have been taught to

believe a single narrative, a “single story” about places and groups of people (Adichie, 2009). Telling different stories is a way to combat the single-story narrative about our lives. Cathy Park Hong (2021) expressed that as Asian Americans, we grew up listening to stories about white people—good stories, triumphant stories, strange stories, mediocre stories, bad stories—so that they are somehow seen as more human, because every aspect of their lives have been talked about, read about, recorded somewhere. We need to put our stories out there, not overly simplified stories of “good immigrants,” of “suffering,” but complex lived stories that help us relate to ourselves more as human. Kazakh scholar Guldana Salimjan (personal communication, May, 2022) taught me that we have to write down stories that are not welcomed in the mainstream colonial narrative in order to prevent “historical amnesia,” stopping ourselves from forgetting. As her words imply, we tell stories of ourselves, of resistance, of living despite and against the oppressive order, not only to remember and be renewed, but because they are also a “historical geography of the future” (Gilmore, 2022, p. 2). We are slowly mapping out the alternatives that we are imagining and envisioning—we are ensuring our own futurities.

Lastly, it is important to note that within these two central methods is the invocation of memory and specifically memory’s interaction with particular places. Memory, history, and the idea of heritage have been essential parts of creating a sense of place for many, but here I do not want to equate memory to history or heritage. Instead, I recognize the historicity of memory in the making of a “place-world” , as anthropologist Keith Basso puts it: “…the past has a way of luring curious travelers off the beaten track. It is, after all, a country conductive to wandering, with plenty of unmarked roads, unexpected vistas, and unforeseen occurrences” (1996, p.3). The past is a counselling and instructive place that gives clue to where one has been and connects to “*what happened here*” (1996, p.4). The construction of a place-world is highly complex and allows an opening to understand diverse ways of being and relating to the world. Place-worlds are memories with authority (1996, p.32).

As indicated, I am interested in how returning to one’s past memories, and places can be a site of resistance, remembering, and reclaiming. bell hooks proposes that the process of remembering is a practice of transgressing the line, in that history does not need to serve as a judgment of the past controlled by the present, but it is a “counter-memory” (Foucault, 1980) that pushes against the dominant notion of “truth.”

Counter-memory can act as a source for renewed relationships to the past, and thus the present and future (Basso, 1996; hooks, 2009). It is through this potential of revisioning, rememory (Basso, 1996), and reinhabiting (Ahmed, 2017) that tapping into place-memory can offer a sense of place that is empowering and counter-hegemonic.

Mapping the journey

The rest of the dissertation consists of four parts—three place-based narratives and one summative reflection. Each of the place-based narratives embodies my own distinct social, cultural, political, and academic positionalities as well the temporal and spatial distance to the events and practices being described. Although the chapters present different or seemingly separated stages of the re-search journey, they profoundly inform one another. As these stories are entangled in my own lived experiences, they provide an image of the complexity that comes with living with and resisting oppressive forces. This is to acknowledge the multiple tensions and contradictions when it comes to my own senses of border, of identity, and of different positionalities as I traverse different places.

Moreover, these three chapters also present the different ways and processes in which colonial capitalism manifests: first, how migration is directed by influences of Western imperialism and global capitalism; second, how Indigenous land dispossession and assimilation happens through government intervention in natural disaster recovery; and third, how further land grab and profit making are realized through orientalist cultural appropriation, gentrification, and development. By interrogating these manifestations, I hope to create a space to learn from anti-colonial/decolonial, anti-capitalist struggles with a "non-fragmentary" perspective, understanding them to be place-specific and indeed deeply informed and shaped by place. Migration scholar Soma Chatterjee (2019), following Bannerji, emphasizes that capitalism depends on and creates a "fragmentation of the overall social" (p.7) and that colonial, racialized and gendered formations are fundamentally part of capitalist production. Therefore, as Chatterjee argues, it is important to move towards a "…'non-fragmentary understanding of the social,' without, however surrendering to the liberal pluralist standard of sameness…." (p.7).

First, chapter 2 situates my own lived experiences in and with multiple places through memory-based reflection as the method of returning—in other words, to re-

encounter places through memories. On one level this chapter is an account to situate myself, to show where I am coming from and how I began my journey of (im)migration, encountered border control, racialization, and became an educator. On another level, through the framework of border imperialism (Walia, 2013), I offer an analysis of migration and the question of mobility as reflected in my own lived experiences, positing that modern migration is not about free choice to move but it is shaped and mobilized through global capitalism and colonialism, including specific mechanisms such as racialization, borders, and citizenship. Lastly, I reflect on my own experiences as an educator and as a migrant student: first, to tease out the intimate ways in which the formal education system reinforces border-imperialist logic; and second, to highlight how education also holds the potential for liberation through radical pedagogy, by creating communal spaces of critical thinking, excitement, resistance, and reclaiming subjugated knowledge through radical teaching and learning.

While Chapter 2 relies on memory work, in Chapter 3 I describe how I physically returned to my birthplace Taiwan as a Western-educated academic researcher. This is the first time I returned to Taiwan since I was 16 years old, and through reconnecting with Taiwan and my father side's family, I come to realize the settler colonial reality of Taiwan as a nation state and our family's position as Han settlers. In this chapter, I first offer a framing of Taiwan and its struggle over place and identity in the context of the complex layers of settler colonial capitalist structures created through Taiwan's specific history. I then focus on my time with the Indigenous community Kucapungane in Rinari Township in South Taiwan and the lessons I learned from their land-based resistance. Following a devastating typhoon, Morakot, in 2009, the community's relocation by the colonial government in Taiwan failed to consider its traditional land-based practices or autonomous forms of self-government. Despite this, the people of Kucapungane are working to reconnect their young people with their ancestral home and have created a tourism program that reverses the consumeristic nature of tourism, teaching the settlers and visitors about their struggle, their land, and stories on their own terms. Through my involvement in these activities, I gained a deeper sense of the responsibility that comes with my settler positionality as well as the possibilities of land-based resistance.

In the last place-based narrative, I dive into my own personal participation as a community organizer in Vancouver's Chinatown and investigate the ways in which we are collectively pushing back on rampant gentrification and anti-Asian racism, while

learning to align ourselves with Indigenous struggle and the project of decolonization. I first present an analysis of Asian racialization as an integral part of the process of settler colonial capitalism. By acknowledging this intricate and interlocking relationship, we can learn to better align ourselves with the project and vision of decolonization without further perpetuating colonialism in our own struggle for justice. This is illustrated by my two years of experience organizing with working-class senior residents and allies in Chinatown during the last year of a campaign that fought against the development of a luxury condo at 105 Keefer St., and the year following the victory. During this time, we began to realign our relationship to the colonial state through learning about and participating in the struggle of our Indigenous neighbours. We also learned that we needed to reclaim our own humanity and cultural resources by establishing intergenerational relationships and knowledge exchange, finding joy and empowerment in such communal experiences.

Finally, in chapter 5, I offer a deeper reflection into what I have been calling "radical pedagogy of place" and some of the lessons that emerged through this re-search. First, radical pedagogy of place calls for a practice of hospitality that is reciprocal and responsive on the part of both the host and the guest, based on a deep respect for the boundaries and integrity of the community and place. Boundaries in this sense are very different from the border apparatus that controls and divides land, bodies, belonging and mobility; rather, they resemble the porous and dynamic boundaries of the natural world, which serve as spaces and zones for exchanges and openings. Lastly, I reiterate that decolonization is situated at the centre of this project. Although fundamentally decolonization is calling us to dismantle colonial structures and advance Indigenous self-determination and land back, it is also a generative process that calls us to continuously imagine and enact, both personally and collectively, what a flourishing world for all looks like. To do so, I posit that the commitment to decolonization places an ethical demand on us, to respond to and be transformed by the intimate ways place knows us, enabling us to co-create decolonial knowledge and practices that are deeply grounded in who and where we are.

To end, I reflect on the experience of a Global Asia course I taught in the summer of 2023, as I was in the final stages of writing this dissertation. In this course, we grappled with questions of migration, decolonization, and social change by going directly into the communities to learn from community organizers and by participating in

organizing actions. Facilitating this collective learning journey confirmed for me that radical pedagogy of place is not just about providing tools for critique; it is the practice of creating space for place-based encounters that allows for deeper and more transformative learning. Radical pedagogy of place is, ultimately, an emergent praxis that requires imaginative and self-reflective commitment to place and its liberation.

Chapter 2. Borders and Beginnings

In this chapter, I will situate myself in the context of where I come from and where I have been. This means to introduce and articulate my own becoming in the context of encountering migration and border crossing. Writing this has not been an easy task. I have had to confront my own discomfort in sharing my personal stories, bringing them to voice. These stories are indeed intimately intertwined with struggle with place, identity, movement, and articulation.

The difficulty in articulating my story, I believe, stems in part from the way I have been enculturated with a virtue of humility, which for girls and women translates to "Keep your head down and don't say anything. Let your father, brother or husband speak." Fortunately, I grew up surrounded by strong women. They have always supported and executed most of the decisions for our family, while pushing back and defying the rules of patriarchy in their own ways. These women are my earliest feminist exemplars and no matter what they think of their own lives, they continue to support me to be someone who dare to challenge the limitations placed on women. So my present undertaking, to anchor my work in my own situatedness and sense of identity, is my way to honour my first feminist mentors, first of all, but also to assert my own journey as a site that holds potential for discrediting the dominating narrative of the "single story" (Adichie, 2009).

In my approach to identity and positionality, I take guidance from Grace Lee Boggs, the revolutionary feminist activist and philosopher who drew on her heritage as the US-born daughter of Guangdong immigrants to inform her organizing work with marginalized and racialized groups. In a review of her autobiography, *Living for Change* (1998), one observer described her conception of identity as

> a dynamic category, filled with the resources of culture that come to us from our various ancestors as well as the hope toward myriad kinds of unities in the future, [so] we might be able to enhance our current struggles and put our shoulders to the wheel of those suffer the wright of capitalism (Prashad, 1998, p. 301).

In this case, identity is also a political category—the entry point for me to understand a world of struggle for justice. To invoke the identity of Asian, Chinese, or Taiwanese is also to be subjected to the ways such identities are understood in the larger racial structures of capitalist colonialism. Ien Ang (2001) expresses, "if I am inescapably

Chinese by descent, I am only sometimes Chinese by consent. When and how is a matter of politics" (p. 51). For example, she points out, "Chinese identity is never a simple issue: it is both an expression of political marginalization in the postcolonial nation-state and an indication of (real and imagined) economic privilege" (p. 12). Here she is referring to the way Chinese immigrants have been positioned as the model minority, representing economic success, actual or perceived.

Identity is also paradoxical and ambiguous for someone who has dwelled in various cultures. Identity is constantly being re-sought, re-made, and re-negotiated. It is a "fluid space of crossing borders and, as such, a contradictory one of collusion and oppositionality, complicity and subversion" (Henry, 2010, p. 360). It is not well defined but relative to the place where I am—I experience this cultural hybridity as something like a colorful cocktail in which the colors and tastes and balance of the ingredients blur and change constantly. Part of this involves the work of creating new spaces where I can find comfort. Nevertheless, I find myself always encountering walls and pushing back on the colonial rules that create and maintain divisions and essentialized categories. Therefore, in this work, identity is not only the very thing I fight for—to have my fluid hybrid identity recognized as something that is always being explored and re-understood—but also something to be invoked constantly in the context of political work aimed at building a just future.

From this it follows that it is also important to know when to *reject* the notion of identity, or to go beyond it by revealing the power relations in which it is implicated. For example, as I share my migrant journey, I want to emphasize that being an immigrant is about more than claiming a particular kind of lived identity; it is also constituted by an imposition of political and social relations. Robin D.G. Kelly (2021) explains:

> It is a historically contingent relational category imposed by the state.… The category of im/migrant has been essential in forming the nation-state and national identity; constructing borders and a security regime to define and police those borders; and reproducing ideologies justifying inclusion, exclusion and outright criminalization (p. xvii).

Becoming: Early beginnings

I am the only daughter of Liu Hsaing Yuan, my mother, and Ho Wan Jun, my father. I am a third generation Taiwanese Han settler on my father's side. His parents,

my yie yie and nai nai, came to Taiwan with the Nationalist Party or Kuomintang (KMT) following their loss in the civil war to the Communist Party, who took control of mainland China. My maternal grandfather, wai gong, also came during that time. Both my yie yie and wai gong served in the KMT army. My wai poh's family on the other hand has been in Taiwan for many generations, as they were part of the earlier stages of Han settlement. They are Hokkien and speak Taiwan Hokkien as their first language, whereas both my grandfathers speak Mandarin Chinese. I spent my childhood in Southern Taiwan, in Kaohsiung City, an industrial centre and the second largest city after Taipei at the time. I also visited Taipei often, where I was born and where both my maternal and paternal grandparents lived.

I spent significant amounts of time with my maternal grandma. I call her nainai, even though I should be calling her wai poh as my maternal grandmother. In that patriarchal culture, being a daughter of a daughter, I am considered as an "outside" grandchild; I started calling her nainai as a way to signal the closeness and connection I felt with her. Spending my early childhood with her, I witnessed her strength, care, and wisdom when it came to respecting the ancestors and taking care of the more than human life around us. Even though we lived in the heart of an urban area, her place was always filled with plants and vegetation.

I also experienced and learned from her resilience and the way she navigated the patriarchy. When I was in third grade, nainai started night school to learn how to read and write, as she was never able to attend school as a child. She told me recently that a large portion of her childhood was during the last stage of the Japanese occupation. As colonial subjects, families were required to give up their traditional names and take up Japanese names in order to access services and education. Her father would not give up their names. As the fourth oldest sister of ten siblings, her duty was to take care of the younger siblings, making sure to take them to the nearest bomb shelter when a fighter aircraft came. She also would take some of her siblings to eavesdrop on classes in their neighborhood schools and collect spent writing utensils that other children threw away. She was in her 60s when she started school, which she told me was finally a chance to learn how to read and write so that she could help her grandchildren with homework. "Women and girls should learn these skills so we can stand on our own," nainai would tell me sometimes.

Growing up in the 1990s in Taiwan was a completely different story than in my grandmother and my mother's time. Two years before I was born, one of the world's longest states of martial law was lifted in response to fervent grassroots activism, and ever since then the various Taiwanese movements for freedom, independence and human rights have grown stronger, including the beginning of an Indigenous movement. Nonetheless, in my memory as school children we were absorbing racist images of the Indigenous people of Taiwan. I had no idea one of my closest friends in secondary school was Indigenous, as they had never said anything, until they posted about their indigeneity on social media more recently.

I have always paid close attention to social movements and political news since I was a young girl. I think this was largely because of my parents' own involvement with politics, and my mom's rebellious nature and stories of how she pushed back on her father's strict and authoritarian treatment—stories that had a profound impact on me. I remember my parents acting as the campaign managers for one of the mayoral candidates back when I was a little child. Although we may not have the same political alignment, I always credited my mom for influencing me to care about and participate in politics. Together, we also witnessed the very first democratic presidential election in 1996. While watching the election result, my mother said to me, "this has changed everything for us."

At the same time, Western media and messages permeated what we watched and read, setting up an image of the "American dream." Taiwan, under the rule of the so-called Republic of China, had a deeply dependent relationship with the United States, especially after the end of World War II and during the Cold War, as the poster child of "democracy" against China's "communism." While many working-class Chinese and Taiwanese citizens were denied entry to North America, Taiwanese middle-class students and businesspeople migrated there in droves. As a young child during that time, I ate everything up. I began to dream of a comfortable life in America and urged my mother to send me abroad. But this seemed a dream in our position as a single-parent and working-class family. While my mother agreed that she wanted to see me work towards a better life with more opportunities, she did not want me to be a boarding student living far away from her family.

In 2003, my mom came and told me that she had decided we will move to Belize, a country of which I had never heard before that day. She had not stopped looking for ways for us to move Westward, and that year she and her sister had established connections with other Taiwanese immigrants in Belize. She explained to me that Belize is the only central American country that speaks English as its official language. It is affordable, multilingual, and also one of the few countries that has an alliance with Taiwan, so it is much easier to receive a visa. It would be our 'jumping board' to America, once I have learned English and graduated from English speaking schools. Without even knowing where Belize was, I agreed to the move, because I also believed that Belize would be a jumping board for my mother and I to have a better life. This strategy of "jumping board" as my mom calls it has been practiced by Asian immigrants since the late 1800s as a result of the strict anti-Asian immigration rules in the US and Canada. During the early 1900s, many would arrive in Mexico first, then cross the border into the US. Asian immigrants became the original undocumented immigrants (Lee, 2015).

The journey to Belize was nerve racking, especially when we had to pass through the US via LAX airport. My mother was very worried that we would get sent back to Taiwan if US immigration suspected that we would not board the flight to Belize to try and stay in the US. And she was right to be nervous. We were stuck in the immigration line for hours and almost missed our connecting flight. The reason was that, just as my mom predicted, the immigration officers did not believe we were not staying in the US. It was scary and none of us spoke fluent English, even though I had had years of English classes. Speaking English in the real world when border officers are staring you right in the eyes felt like an impossible mission. We kept repeating "Taca to Belize," pointing to our boarding pass with Taca airlines going to El Salvador first, then to Belize. There were eight of us traveling together—my mother and I, her brother, his wife and his two children, and another family who were coming with us. Each of us had a cart with two big blue crates filled with our belongings inside. The optics must have been bizarre to the other travelers and suspicious to the immigration officers. In my mother's logic, she wanted us to be identifiable to each other, and also the blue crates would be the quickest way for us to have shelves to store our clothes and other items once we arrived in our new home. She did not know it was going to arouse any suspicion. We eventually made it through, with an immigration escort making sure that we indeed boarded our

flight. I know this experience scarred my mother; ever since then, she becomes anxious whenever she has to pass through the airport and immigration.

We entered Belize with tourist visas, the only type of visa for which we were eligible at the time. In the first month I was enrolled in school and my student visa application was underway, but for my mother, it was a different story. She could not find a job that would sponsor her for a work visa as she did not have the language skills to hold positions in her area of expertise. She would go on to be undocumented for several years before finding a pathway to citizenship. Eventually all of us received Belizean citizenship. The difficulty of obtaining Belizean passports has led to a lucrative business venture in which more established and connected Taiwanese immigrants coax people to buy a piece of property or land with the guarantee they can procure citizenship. We have heard about many people who have fallen into this scheme and lost great amounts of money.

Our journey to Belize was a journey of encountering the invisible border walls that render people as good and bad, useful, or useless, and a whole business ecology spawned from it through the commodification of citizenship. My mom said to me at the airport, “That’s why I want you to learn English, so people don’t look down on us.” Since I was young, I had taken regular doses of Western imperialism, internalizing our second-class status. I remember in high school, when I was planning to study in the US, an uncle in our community said to me, “when you finish your degree, don’t stay in the US as you will never be as good to compete with the White people there. Go back to Asia where you can be on the top.” I was quite disturbed by that comment because it disclosed our own internalized inferiority and hierarchical division. I was slowly realizing that the West was not the utopian haven we imagined it to be—through imperialist propaganda, we had been made to believe the American dream ethos and to internalize the global hierarchy. In other words, we had started to believe we were not as good or valuable as we might have felt ourselves to be, if we had not been touched by the unholy baptism of Western ideals.

Reflections on my experience of migration

Our decision to move to Belize was not accidental or solely based on personal choice or desire to live in a different country. It was motivated by the drive to look for

what we were made to believe would be a “better life”— a story constructed and mystified by Western imperialist globalization that constantly positions the West and Western culture as the centre of life and of knowledge (Smith, 1999), setting up asymmetrical power relations and a global racial hierarchy.

Levi Gahman and Elise Hjalmarson (2019) argue that the categories of migrant and immigrant are often taken up without a thorough discussion of what they constitute. Conventionally, the two categories are distinguished by the degree of permanency of residence in the place they move to, with migrant cast as the temporary and immigrant as the permanent resident. However, as Gahman & Hjalmarson point out, this type of approach “problematically forefront[s] both choice and mobility, casting im/migrants as individuals or groups who choose to move” (p.116), and it neglects the central role the state—intertwined with global capitalism, colonialism, and its apparatus like borders—plays in the construction of migrant subjectivity. This is not to undermine the agency of im/migrants, but to point out that an emphasis on personal choice in moving under asymmetrical relations of global power tends to conceal the strong undercurrents that compel people to move and influence where they move to.

Harsha Walia offers a useful framework of “border imperialism” to debunk “the myth of Western benevolence towards migrants”—narratives such as the American dream and a welcoming Canada. Border imperialism lays out the “the processes by which the violence and precarities of displacement and migration are structurally created as well as maintained” (Walia, 2013, p. 5). Viewed within this framework, “classifications such as ‘migrant’ or ‘refugee’ don’t represent unified social groups so much as they symbolize state-regulated relations of governance and difference” (Walia, 2021, p. 2).

As my family and I become a part of the global im/migrant population, our racialized migrant subjectivity becomes an important entry point in teasing out the forces that compelled our move in the first place, and the consequences for one's identity and subjectivity of this migratory coercion and racialization. At the same time, learning through my own lived experiences, I also see the tenacity of im/migrants in the form of the various creative strategies used to confront the immobilizing forces of border rules, as well as the possibilities for connection and belonging mediated through place-based relationships in spite of the dividing forces of border imperialism.

Becoming racialized

I had never thought about questions of race or racism until we lived in Belize. After moving there, I very quickly became acutely aware of my foreignness and "Chineseness." Walking down the street, the catcalls and heckling were nonstop: "Chiney gyal," people would call me. In a way, I have always understood that gender and race experiences cannot be separated; as Asian women, we face a specific form of anti-Asian racism that both desexualizes and hypersexualizes us as well as fetishizes our bodies, attitudes rooted in the history of Western Imperialism in Asia (Jean, 2021). However, I want to highlight not only the experiences my family and I had with racism directed towards us, but that I also had to face my own racism and irrational fear towards the people I encountered when I arrived in Belize. I felt ashamed about my own aversion to my Black Belizean classmates. This started a process of becoming conscious of the way dark skin in Taiwan was portrayed and represented as inferior, in education, media, beauty standards, and governmental policies. I did not have the political language at the time to critique and understand White Western hegemony, but I could sense the wrongness of it. Although I could not articulate it at the time, these new experiences of connection with place and people were giving me a vastly different perspective on the world around me. One important moment on this journey was a trip that I took with the church I was attending at the time, which helped me learn to encounter others as they are and to extend the love I desire for myself to people who do not look like me.

When I first arrived in Belize, like many other newcomers I joined a church to find community and support. It was called Prayer Mountain and headed by a Korean Pastor, Pastor Han. Unlike many other Asian churches or pastors, Pastor Han also pastored outside of the Asian communities. One year, he planned a youth fellowship trip for all of the young people in his churches to a Garifuna village in southern Belize. This village did not have modern conveniences like running water or electricity and all of the participants would be staying in the same place with the villagers. I was very nervous when we started the trip: not only had I never stayed in a place without modern comforts, but I was also scared of the prospect that I would have to spend intimate time with other Belizean people.

For five days, I went with the girls and women to the river to shower. The river was our perfect bathing room. The water was so clear you couldn't hide anything, and

there was a little waterfall that was the perfect shower head. At the river, not only were we at our truest selves physically, but we also opened ourselves up by exchanging stories, gentle teasing and jokes, and lots of laughter. During the day, the older women would take us out into the woods to show us how to harvest and give thanks to the land. I would share with them how my parents also gathered many vegetables around our place, found in the ditches or on roadsides, that were traditional to us. During the night, we would all sing together while thousands of fireflies danced around us. I had never seen anything like this in my life. Those five days of "honest living with the land" (as the elders there described it) and being forced to be true to each other had taken away the distance between people.

Just as we in Taiwan internalized anti-black racism, partly due to the global program of the White Imperial West and partly as a function of our own class structures, anti-Asian racism is ubiquitous in Central and South America (Lee, 2007). Across the continent, we experience the whole spectrum of Asian stereotypes, ranging from rich Asian, good-at-math Asian, everyone-is-Chinese Asian, to stinky Asian, come-to-take-our-jobs-away Asian, and savage, rat-eating Asian. When I first arrived in Belize, I was very quiet and timid as I did not speak much English or know the local cultures. As I started speaking more and more English, I reverted to my usual talkative self. Yet, as an Asian girl, I felt constantly sexualized, dismissed, and expected to behave a certain way. In 10th grade, one of my teachers told me to be quiet in class—he rolled his eyes as he said, "Jade Ho, why can't you be a normal Asian girl?"

Lunch was a whole other playground. Every day I heard comments ranging from curiosity at seeing an "exotic" meal to expressions of disdain and disgust at what I was putting into my body. This parade of comments somehow came to a stop when one of my white classmates started getting lunch from my mom; it was as if this classmate of mine had legitimized the food for us.

To guard against uncomfortable comments and at times scary actions from people on the street, I told myself I need to blend in and be one of *them*. I started telling myself that I am a Belizean; for a period of time, I refused to have anything to do with being Taiwanese. I forced myself to think and speak only in English, along with some Kriol, the vernacular of the country. I even did not want to celebrate lunar new year for a while. I complained to my mom that my breakfast left a smell on my clothes, and I no

longer wanted what she was packing for lunch. Growing up as a teenager in Belize, I came to understand that I was here to learn how not to be a Taiwanese but not quite Belizean either, because our goal was one day to be called American. My friends and I would watch Hollywood movies about American high school lives and wonder what it was like to live there. We would talk about how we would be getting out of Belize once we finished high school.

However, at the same time as I was being socialized into a world where I thought I needed to get rid of some parts of my own identity, I was unknowingly being held and moulded by the land and water around me. One of our favorite rivers was what my mom calls the Chicken Company River, because to access the river you have to go by a narrow road behind Quality Poultry, the national chicken company in Belize. The river is adjacent to a neighbourhood with predominantly poor Mayan folks. Whenever we went to the river, we could also expect Mayan women to be there, scrubbing away either at their loads of laundry or their little butt-naked *pikni*, and other older kids swimming and jumping off the little cliff. We would also jump in by the cliff, or carefully swim by the women not wanting to splash them. Our parents would always bring their cooking equipment to prepare a whole pot of noodle soup and they would share it with whoever was around. This is how we would spend the unbearably hot days in Belize. Although I didn't realize it at the time, this tiny stretch of the river had become our little safe spot: not only did it cool us down with its pristine sweet water, but there was no one who shouted "*chiney*" maliciously in our faces or pinched their noses at our food. When we were there, our differences were just part of the ecology of the place.

Reflections on my experience of racialization

Racist manifestations of Asian bodies are a result of years of Western imperialism in Asia (Au, 2022; Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Jean, 2021). Through what Edward Said (1978) describes as "orientalism," the West positions the "Orient" as a diseased, uncivilized, inferior, and exotic other to be dominated and saved. Orientalism also constructs Asian women as not capable of possessing agency over our bodies; we are to be objectified, submissive, in the service of male dominance and desire.

Orientalism further permeated the understanding, imaginary, and depiction of Asia and Asians throughout the Caribbean, as Asian migrants and indentured labour

arrived to work in the colonial economies of the region (Anatol & Kim, 2023). Christopher Columbus, the first European explorer in the Caribbean, mistakenly thought it was Asia; as Gielle Liza Anatol and Joo Ok Kim argue, his depiction of the Caribbean as a "uncivilized" place full of "heathens" laid a foundation for the imperial ideologies "essential to constructions of race, geography of the 'backward' cultures of the Global South, idealized notions of the 'progress' of the Global North" (Anatol & Kim, p. 122). In other words, orientalism played a foundational role in the making of the white colonial states and the development of Western ideas of liberalism and personhood. Lisa Lowe in her seminal work, *The Intimacies of Four Continents* (2015), draws attention to the often ignored connection between the formation of the Western liberal state, colonialism in the Americas, and transatlantic slavery and the subsequent introduction of Asian exploited labour. She states:

> The intimacies of four continents becomes a way to discuss the coeval global processes of settler colonialism, slavery, and imported colonial labor, as the conditions for British and American national formations of liberty, liberal personhood, society, and government at the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries (2015, p. 20-21).

As one specific aspect of these processes, Asian racialization throughout the 1800s and early 1900s was manifested through the "yellow peril" narrative—the depiction of Asian migrants and "coolie" labour as a danger to "civilized" liberal Western societies. Stereotypes and narratives of Asian people as dirty, bringing diseases, and eating unclean food became part of the popular imaginary across the Western world. Through the depiction of this "yellow peril," Western states were able to mobilize support for a series of exclusionary laws and policies to slow Asian migration, as well as creating cultural divisions to hinder the formation of solidarity ties between different marginalized groups (Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Kawai, 2005).

In the mid-20th century, the racial depiction of Asians diversified to include the model minority myth. The idea of Asian Americans as exceptional, successful, and law-abiding immigrants was first used to cover up the devastating consequences of the atrocious acts of the internment of the Japanese during the Second World War, then pitted against the Black liberation movement. I have observed that many in my community, including myself, have internalized this myth and at times take pride in it. It has created the harmful effect of buying into the racial hierarchy of white supremacy. It

also has led many to believe that anti-Asian racism is not a problem and so we should not take up space.

The model minority status is also tenuous and circumstantial. Rather than belonging to two different historical stages of Asian racialization, yellow perilism and the model minority myth continue to exist in tandem. By positioning us on the spectrum between savages/yellow peril and good immigrants/model minority, Asian racialization effectively mobilizes us in the role of not only self-policing but policing other racial groups rather than seeking solidarity (Iftikar & Museus, 2018). The formation of these racial depictions and stereotypes is intimately intertwined with the ways in which Asian migrants are managed through border regimes and immigration policies—a theme to which I return in Chapter 4.

Becoming border savvy

Our journey to the West was in many ways a journey of crossing and defying borders—pushing against the divisive lines of racial and gender expectations, crisscrossing cultural landscapes to build meaningful relationships, and also navigating physical official borders. Usually we associate migration with movement, but what they don't tell you about immigration is how much it is about not being able to move; for example, you cannot leave a place once you have arrived if you want to have the right status. For many years, we were afraid to go anywhere. We didn't go back to Taiwan to visit our relatives and friends and we didn't go outside of Belize. We always heard a lot about Chetumal, the closest Mexican urban centre just north of Belize. Chetumal seemed to have all the things Belize didn't, namely a McDonald's, a Burger King, other international chain restaurants and a mall. The biggest mall we had when I was in Belize was a two-floor glorified general store with fancy imported goods. At the time, all those international chains were the shiny objects that we could not get for ourselves. Visiting Chetumal was out of the question because we did not have Belizean citizenship, so we would require a Mexican visa or an American visa on our Taiwanese passports. Besides that, non-Belizeans had to pay an exit fee when leaving the Belizean border. All of the process and money made it just too complicated for a leisure trip.

Then, when my brother was a senior in high school, their class planned a trip to Chetumal and the only document required was a social security card, which any resident

could apply for once in Belize. My brother signed his siblings up. I remember that we were ecstatic about the trip. When the day came, we woke up at the crack of dawn and went to the meeting place to cram ourselves into a used school bus. Almost all of the buses in service in Belize are used yellow school buses imported from the US and repainted. For the very first time since we moved to Belize, we were going to cross the border into Mexico.

The Northern Highway, like most of the highways in Belize, is just a narrow two-lane road. On the way to Chetumal, we saw many smaller villages, beautiful bushes and marsh lands, sugar cane fields, and we also passed two other major urban centres, Orange Walk and Corozal. Once in Corozal, the border is just another fifteen minutes away. I started to get a bit nervous, thinking what if the immigration officers catch us since we don't really blend into the rest of the group. At Belizean immigration, together with the other students, we got off the bus and lined up with our social security cards out. Without any questioning, we were waved past with the rest of the people. Step one done, and we were now stepping out of Belize into the in-between borderland. Immediately hustlers came to see if anyone wanted to exchange money. Taking our cue, we exchanged some Belizean dollars for Mexican pesos. We also learned that if we wanted more value out of the transaction, US dollars were the way to go. We got on the bus again and continued to Mexican immigration. In the borderland between Mexico and Belize sits a huge bustling commercial area with casino hotels and retail. It is the Belize Free Zone, established in 1994 as part of the global neoliberal turn to attract foreign investments at a reduced taxation rate. It is part of the pattern that marks Belize as a post-colonial nation that is still controlled by foreign powers (mainly the US) through land ownership and capital investment. The bus pulled over in front of the Rio Hondo Bridge, a short iron bridge that leads to Mexican border control. Walking over this bridge gave us a real feeling of crossing the border, as we looked down and saw the river below us while vehicles passed with loud clanking sounds. I was nervous, even more so than when passing Belizean immigration, but thanks to being with the group we went through without being questioned. We were now officially in Mexico.

Little did we know that we would re-enact this dance again and again for the next five years, as one by one we headed to Chetumal to study and begin a new stage of our lives. Throughout those years we would be facing and fighting many immigration hurtles and discrimination, and like our ancestors before us, we would be finding creative ways

to navigate draconian rules, including sometimes using discrimination to our advantage. I cannot remember all the instances now—they have become an instinct, or I would like to call it being “border savvy”—but I remember the occasion when I was first applying for university in Chetumal. At this time I was still in the process of getting my Belizean citizenship. My mom and I had begun applying for citizenship in 2006 through my stepfather, a Taiwanese merchant who also holds Belizean citizenship, and a year later, we attended the citizenship ceremony for my mom and my step-siblings. However, my application was stalled because I turned 18 in 2007 and had to start the application over as an adult. This was a major setback; for one thing, this meant I still could not cross the Mexican border, but I would need to as I was already applying for university there and had to be there in person for documentation. Out of desperation, my mom decided we would go with me using my sister’s passport. I adamantly opposed this dangerous idea, but my mom said, “Trust me, they won’t even notice because they think all of us look the same.” And lo and behold, I passed immigration without any major problem and made my appointment on time.

Finally in 2008, I was able to attend my own citizenship ceremony and received my passport. On my passport, my name Yi-Chien Ho was allocated incorrectly, Chien being mistaken as my middle name. But I was so relieved to have a passport, and so afraid of it being taken away after a long and difficult process, that I just let my name stay the same.

In 2008, my brother and I moved to Chetumal to pursue our undergraduate degrees. Chetumal was a place where I experienced the world in some of its truest colours. In the literal sense, I swam in lagoons of seven different shades of blue, celebrated festivities that were ornamented with assorted brightly coloured decorations, and picnicked on the white sandy beach by the Caribbean Sea that is so blue it blends into the sky. On the other hand, I also sank into the dark grey night by Chetumal Bay, looking over to Belize and missing home—missing a place where its languages don’t escape me. Having to learn a new language all over again was painful; I felt like I had used up all my energy to push English into my being, that I might not have the strength to make space for another tongue. But Spanish and the vibrant hospitable Mexican culture so generously took me in. As an early-twenty-something, I passed over into adulthood on this colourful land. Although it was apparent that racial, gender, and class discrimination were very much present in Mexican society, I had found a community that

held me close ever since my arrival. They gave me a sense of belonging that was almost unconditional. Every family event, every Sunday lunch, every party, and every vacation, I have a place with them. I was their *chinita,* understanding that they use the term *chinita* with lots of *cariños*. Being held and taken in in such a way truly impacted how I view the processes of community formation and collective care, values that have become so much a part of me now.

Reflections on my experience of living with borders

Although I did not physically cross a land border before going to Mexico, I believe my experiences of encountering borders started even before I left Taiwan, in terms of our choices to move and where to move to—working through visa processes, strategizing how to get through immigration inspections, and staying put until we had the right papers. Although migration connotes degrees of mobility, our experiences with borders and border rules were the living proof of my earlier point, that migration is also about immobility, about earning one's place through state-mediated channels and playing one's part in the reinforcement of the nation-state and hierarchized social relations. Earning citizenship, although it unlocks access to certain basic rights of the nation, does not necessarily lead to an experience of equal national membership for many racialized immigrants.

Structurally, migration is the result of Western imperialism, capitalism, and oppressive regimes, but migration in our contemporary time is also "itself a mode of global governance, capital accumulation, and gendered social class formation" (Walia, 2021, p. 6). However, my time with my community in Mexico, and experiences like the ones I described at the "Chicken Company" River, show that one's lived experiences as an immigrant cannot be equated with the fixed identity attributed and ratified by the state. Walia (2013) explains that one of the constructions of border imperialism is "the racialized hierarchy of national and imperial identity, which anchors and shapes the understanding of citizenship and belonging within the nation-state as well within the grid of global empire" (p.61). Yet within such hierarchies there are also possibilities for horizontal solidarity and decolonial resistance, especially within the informal and place-based encounters and interactions of everyday life.

Becoming an educator

A year into my time in Chetumal, I started my first official teaching position as a Mandarin instructor co-teaching with my brother at our university. Subsequently I went on to teach English in several other universities in the city. Since I am the oldest girl (jie jie/ da jie) in my maternal family, the duty of care taking and teaching the younger children has always been bestowed on me. When I was still a young child myself, I would hold classes for my cousins to study story books, traditional Chinese poetry, or English words using whatever flash cards I could find in the bookstore. I always looked out for special and interesting trinkets or crafts to turn them into materials to use in my little class. I was a very strict and mean teacher back then (my cousins can attest to it), just as my teachers at school had been. Later, I started working as a tutor when I was 15, teaching other Taiwanese newcomers English. I worked as a tutor all the way until I moved to Chetumal and started teaching in language centres of different universities. Perhaps it was because of my own socialization as the oldest sister that I was always drawn to share what I know and to bask in the rewarding and reciprocal process of this type of sharing. I have always loved being the one to witness learning happen. I always felt fortunate that, ever since I was a child, I knew in my bones what I was destined to be when I grew up—an educator.

Although I have always been taught that education, in this case formal education, is important and the key to a good life, I did not realize how far-reaching the influence of education is on one's being until I moved to Belize and started attending high school in a different cultural and social setting. In my 9th grade science class, we were learning about the basics of mechanics, and for our term project we had to create "something that moves." The scope was very broad—as long as we applied what was taught in class, we could create anything we wanted. When I received the instructions about this assignment, I was completely lost and did not know what to do. Back in Taiwan, for this kind of assignment we would just go to a stationery store, buy a kit, go home and follow the instructions—then your electric grid or some other science-project thing would be built. Stationery stores in Belize don't have anything like this. It felt like the teacher was asking for the impossible. All of a sudden, a light bulb went on—I went to my stash of Taiwanese junk food, as many of the packages include little toys as a gift of purchase. I opened one of them that provided a little toy car, the kind that moves when you pull it

back first. I took off its original plastic body and wrapped it with a cardboard cover that I designed to fit onto the car. I even painted it a nice baby yellow and drew some cute flowers on it. I was quite pleased with this little “creation,” even though I had nothing to do with building the parts that actually made the car move. When the day arrived, I proudly brought my little yellow car to class, but as I walked into the classroom, I was utterly surprised and shocked by what other people had done—ocean wave simulation, a walking stuffed dog, telescopic tongs, but what I was most impressed by was a fully functioning electric fan with each blade made with woven coconut leaves. My classmate told me he went to the dumpster to gather some materials, and that was when he found the motor of a broken-down fan. He was able to fix the motor and he and his mom wove the leaves together as they had done in their Mayan tradition since he was a little child.

I believe this was a crucial experience that led me to inquire more into the ways in which education influences one’s being and its presence in different social processes. I started asking what had happened in my own educational upbringing that impeded me from going outside of the box and trusting my own creativity. I started to see that as students we also hold our own set of knowledges and experiences that need to be taken into account in the education process. This story is by no means a comparison between the Taiwanese and Belizean formal educational systems, as both educational systems warrant their own critiques and examination. In fact, there has been ample critique about the role formal education has played in perpetuating systemic domination and oppression globally (Giroux, 1992; hooks, 2014; Prakash & Esteva, 1998; also see Black, 2010). I did not have this kind of critical analysis yet when I started teaching English in Chetumal, but I certainly witnessed the effects of the system in action.

Becoming a classroom teacher was a moment of pride in my life. I felt like I was finally doing what I was supposed to do. I think I was lucky in a way that I started teaching when I was still a student myself, so that I felt very much connected to the thinking, interests, and lives of my own students. I did my best to bring in topics that I knew were related to what they cared about and to build a classroom environment where trust was at the foundation, so people felt safe to make mistakes in this new language they had to acquire. I learned that classrooms are places that have the potential for building strong communities and lasting relationships. As an immigrant teacher, that meant a lot to me. Although I generally had engaged students that worked hard to succeed in the English class, I also saw that for many this was just a requirement to

graduate—English class was both a burden and a reminder of the bleak reality that without English skills, many doors would be shut. Many students asked me, “Teacher, why is English so important?” And I didn’t have a good answer for them.

Another struggle I had was with the content of our curriculum and its hyper-focus on nationalistic American and British cultures. Every page of the textbook told a different glorious story of the great “white” north, sending a message that there would be no hope for Mexico unless it became more like them. Students, especially students of Mayan descent, experienced a deep sense of displacement from the beginning of their educational journey. One day, in one of my classes, I was sitting in the back of a windowless classroom under bright fluorescent lights with a rubric in front of me. I was supposed to evaluate my students’ oral presentations. At the front of the classroom, three students were stumbling and lost in their notes full of impersonal English words as they tried to discuss the Fourth of July, the US Independence Day. Everyone was flustered and frustrated. I was trying my best to encourage them and coax vocabulary out of them, but I thought to myself, “Why are we making them do this?” I felt as though my students had disappeared—that their own lives, knowledge, culture had been displaced right here, in their own place.

As time passed, I became very unsatisfied and disillusioned in my job (which was also precarious, with inconsistent pay). I was convinced the education I was a part of was no good for my students and I desperately wanted to find a way to change that. This unsettling feeling that “something is not right” eventually drove me to pursue graduate study in Vancouver. It was during this time in Vancouver that I found language to name my myriad experiences, and I also found community where I learned and developed political consciousness and participation.

Reflection on education as a practice of liberation

Many have pointed out the ways in which formal education can be an important apparatus for the maintenance of systems of oppression (see Darder et al., 2003). As Paulo Freire (1993) argues in his influential work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, “Education as the exercise of domination stimulates the credulity of students, with the ideological intent (often not perceived by educators) of indoctrinating them to adapt to the world of oppression” (p. 65). Here I want to take it further and argue that education

that reinforces domination, as described by bell hooks (1994), takes three observable forms. First, at its curricular level, education for domination socializes students into a docile labour force and instills colonial capitalist values that emphasize individualism, competition, exploitative expansion, and profit-driven mindsets (Fanelli & Evans, 2015; Giroux, 1992; hooks, 1994). Second, at a structural level education has become commodified in the neoliberal era (Fanelli & Evans, 2015). Rather than an institution of learning, education has become a packaged product for one to pursue necessary credentials. Third, education also has an intimate relationship to colonial border regimes and acts as an immigration pathway and intermediary for international students.

As an example, to focus in on higher education in Canada, “International students” have recently been positioned as a financial source for neoliberal universities. To better describe the structural formation of the international student, “migrant student” is a term that highlights the precarious and exploitative nature of the international student experience. In the latest form of the neoliberal university, the institution increasingly recruits racialized migrant students who often become cheap labor both on the school campus and beyond it. Migrant students enter a restrictively defined relationship with the state via the conditions dictated by the visa and the rules of the institution. In this way, the visa and educational institution grant the student a “status” that becomes a tool for their own coercion (Hatton, 2020). This process of legitimization of one’s presence in the country controls bodies and movements, asserts colonial nationalistic authority, and creates barriers for migrant students “in developing a critical awareness of the violent conditions that enabled their study and stay” (Chen, 2021, p. 4).

Although my experience with formal education, both as an international student for most of my life and as an educator, can be located in these three interlocking forms of education as domination, I have also experienced the radical possibilities of educational space for countering these conditions. As an educator, I have always been motivated by the well-being of the classroom community. When I was teaching English in Mexico, although I daily had to negotiate the curricular obligations placed by the institution, I found that once I stepped into the classroom my primary obligation was to the human beings who placed their trust in me, and thus I has to prioritize forming a healthy and caring learning environment inside and outside of the classroom. I did my best, within the limitations placed upon me, to help students feel safe and to not be bogged down by the implications their command of English might have for the rest of

their lives. I wanted them to see English as a tool and not something they had to submit to. To do that, I had to “transgress” the borders set up by the educational system that would not allow education to be a practice of liberation.

In Chapter 1, I discussed bell hooks only in terms of her feminist influence on me, but she has also influenced me greatly in the way I think about and practice education. In *Teaching to Transgress: Education as the Practice of Freedom* (2014), a book inspired in part by Freire’s work, she talks extensively about the radical potential of education as a practice of freedom and the role of the educator in creating a classroom environment that not only hones students’ critical ability to see the world, but also fosters a “communal place” to practice creating excitement, pleasure, and resistance collectively (p. 8). In this sense, the educator is “meant to serve as a catalyst that calls everyone to become more and more engaged, to become active participants in learning” (p. 11). Educators can do so by realizing that learning at its most powerful is liberating, and this reorients our relationship to the role of an educator—not as someone who merely enacts the curriculum assigned to them, but someone who co-creates liberating knowledge and practices together with the students, as well as someone who grows within the process. With this awareness, the pedagogical approach which she sees as an engaged radical pedagogy comes from the interconnected foundation of “anti-colonial, critical and feminist pedagogies” (p. 10) and prioritizes the “well-being” of both educators and students (p. 15).

For me, understanding education as a practice of liberation makes education expansive and goes beyond the confines of schooling. Today, as I teach within a faculty of education, I often remind my students that education does not equate to formal schooling, but it suggests a process of growth and transformation that is often most powerful when cultivated as a collective undertaking. If we take on social issues with such an educational lens, then our strategies should always pay attention to how we create the liberatory pedagogical conditions for each other in order to transform institutions and oppressive systems radically. Part of creating these liberatory pedagogical conditions is through co-creating a space where we can uncover our collective and personal memories and stories as the fertile ground of our analysis, learning, and renewal.

Chapter 3. Re-encountering Taiwan

In 2016, I went back to Taiwan for the first time in 11 years. On paper, I went back as a visiting scholar; in fact, that was really the only way I could afford to go back to Taiwan for a significant amount of time. At this point, I had not seen my father for 11 years and had not connected with my father's side of the family since I left Taiwan. When I was living in Belize, I remember going back to Taiwan always seemed like an impossible task for us. The plane ticket price, arduous transits, time commitment, and having the right documents to come back were all big barriers. Whenever we heard of people who were going back, the news would be shared at the dinner table as the newest town gossip. When I was in university, my yie yie (paternal grandfather) passed away, but my mom was not able to support me to attend his funeral in Taiwan. I have always felt a deep sense of loss and regret for not being able to say goodbye to my yie yie. I used to think to myself—if even such a big life event isn't reason enough to go back to Taiwan, perhaps there is no reason go back. So I pushed this desire to reconnect with my family and with Taiwan down into a dark corner of myself and moved on.

Fast forward to 2016. I had been in Canada for three years at that point. The housing justice campaign in Chinatown was at its height—we had a robust collective that was not only grappling with how to win the fight around 105 Keefer, but also wanted to link up our efforts with Indigenous struggle. We were asking ourselves how to build a movement that would centre working-class Chinese immigrants and challenge the legitimacy of colonialism at the same time. That brought us face-to-face with the question: What does decolonization mean to us collectively and to each of us individually?

For me, this question brought up a whole other line of questions about who I am. I realized that, in order to learn how to be where I am responsibly, I needed to know where I had come from, where I had been. I realized I did not really know my own history. I wanted to know if I came from a people with its own practices, traditions, and relationships to land that were not dictated by colonial and capitalist ideas. From what I remembered of my grandmother's planting practice, my parents' foraging activities, paying respects to the Land God, and the many poems that we had to memorize and

recite in school about honoring the land's harvest, I suspected that we too had a deep relationship to land. This was something I desperately wanted to find out. Meanwhile, in my graduate program, I had reached the stage where I needed to determine a direction for my research. So, I decided to take up the feminist call of "returning" to my origins with my questions about decolonization and about the land I came from. I decided to honour my long-neglected desire to reconnect and reencounter the island of my birth, Taiwan, and to face all that I had left behind and perhaps didn't want to face again—patriarchal reality, my complicated relationship to my father, and a sense of lost family ties.

I was fortunate to connect with Dr. Huang Mao Tsai, a researcher at the Outdoor Education Office of the National Academy for Educational Research (NAER) in Sanxia, a township on the outskirts of Taipei City. The NAER is a public research institution that has input into policy decisions regarding the nation's curriculum and educational trends. During the two months I was there, I was working with a group of teachers to build out a place-based curriculum for fifth and sixth grade students in a local elementary school, and I also had the chance to interview teachers and administrators from three other schools in Taiwan who were focusing on outdoor education. In order to do this work, I had to immerse myself and cultivate an intimate relationship with the place I found myself, Sanxia. I learned about the historical evolution of the town, the relationship between local industry and local ecology, the spiritual beliefs that influenced how the streets were formed, and the local artisans who were revitalizing traditional skills. Amongst all of this, the Indigenous voice was nowhere to be found. "Sanxia is not where Indigenous people live," people I encountered would tell me.

As I reflected on this silence, it dawned on me that my family had only been in Taiwan for three generations. With the community organizing experiences and learning about settler coloniality of Canada that I have had been doing in Vancouver, I began to question my family's positionality in Taiwan and the nature of how Taiwan as nation is set up. Just as I grapple with my positionality as an immigrant settler in Coast Salish territories, I realized that here in Taiwan I am in fact from a family of Han settlers, and I started to see the settler coloniality of Taiwan as a nation state. This was a change in positionality that I hadn't known I was going to need to confront, unpack, and comprehend. I realized that to relearn about this land that I thought I could call my own, and to understand the responsibility that came with my newly understood positionality, I must find a way to centre the voices and stories of the land's First Peoples and their

struggle. That learning in turn would help me grapple with my family's position in the complex colonial layers of Taiwan's history and present.

From 2016 to 2018, I visited Taiwan three times, staying there for a total of seven months. During these three visits, I supported the place-based initiatives at NAER, visited schools, interviewed teachers and students, and attended conferences. On my third visit in February 2018, I went back with the direct goal of connecting with Indigenous and marginalized communities in Taiwan. In the span of four months, I conducted field work at three different communities. However, I was also very intentional about rebuilding relationship to Taiwan and to my family—so outside of planned research fieldwork, I also took time to visit a few places that were unfamiliar to me, as well as places from my childhood. The process of feminist inquiry allowed me to be responsive to emergent opportunities, and every encounter became meaningful.

I was also intentional about spending time with my father and with family members that I have not seen in a very long time. Specifically, I wanted to learn more of my family history and its entanglement with the colonial nation-building project and the Taiwanese identity. I remember that when I was a little child, I would visit my yie yie during school vacation time. At that time he was the closest person I had on that side of the family. I would sneak into his room to ask for an allowance and for junk food that I wouldn't be allowed to eat at home. In exchange for allowance or snacks, I would patiently let him show me his large stamp collection and talk my ear off with his war stories and recollections of our family back in China. One time when I was about 12, he called me into his room and pulled a thick volume off his bookshelf. It was a newly printed chronology of the Ho family. He went through it page by page, and as he turned to the last section of the book, our family portrait was there. I saw myself as a little baby sitting in my yie yei's lap in that photo. I didn't understand what it meant for him to show me the family record, but I always remember that moment because somehow I felt bigger than myself, bigger than the families we have in Taiwan. That was really the only time anyone had ever talked to me about our ancestry.

Being a part of the KMT resettlement process, my father and his siblings grew up with their parents in the special military residence (眷村 juan cun). That was the period when martial law was established and Mandarin was imposed on the rest of the population who were not native speakers. New ethnic categories were created of

Waishenren (“out of province people,” i.e. mainlanders) and Benshenren (“local province people”, i.e. native Taiwanese—mainly Hokkien settlers whose ancestors had come to Taiwan in earlier migrations and who had lived through the Japanese occupation). These ethnic categories were predicated on their degree of Chineseness to satisfy the illusion of the one-China rule from the island, and Waishenren received preferential treatment from the KMT regime. Nevertheless, under this oppressive regime, pro-democracy social movements that pushed back on KMT rule formed and a Taiwanese consciousness started emerging. In 1989, two years after the end of martial law, the Democratic Progressive Party was established and it mobilized a new way of understanding Taiwanese society through the idea of “Taiwan’s Four Great Ethnic Groups” (Taiwan si da zuqun), namely Hokkien, Hakka, Mainlander and Indigenous people. This was a move from using historical continuity with China as the source of legitimacy to basing it on a shared historical experience in Taiwan itself (Simon, 2011).

Although the distinction between Waishenren and Benshenren was still very much talked about when I was growing up, for people of my generation, born after the end of Martial Law, the concern is more focused on our Taiwaneseness. I saw this difference in my parents’ generation, where both my father and my mother (and many of my aunts and uncles) were strong KMT supporters and still identify deeply as Waishenren. Because of the patriarchal culture, my nainai played down her Hokkien identity and language and only spoke Mandarin with us.

It is within this newfound understanding of my family’s positionality and Taiwan’s political and social reality that I came back to my work in Taiwan in 2018 —humbled and ready to learn from grassroots communities (and understanding that I would have a lot of unlearning to do). Although during this particular visit, I spent time in three different places, I will mainly focus on my time spent with the Indigenous community, Kucapungane, a community in Rinari township in Southern Taiwan that was displaced by the government’s disaster recovery policy. Despite the limitations and hardships placed upon them, they are pushing back by setting up a visiting and educational program based on their land-based practices to ensure their own survival and to tell their stories. Before recounting my experience with Kucapungane, I will first situate Taiwan’s struggle with place and identity in the context of its settler colonial capitalist reality. This will help establish the context for my observations and experiences throughout my three return visits to Taiwan.

Place and the Taiwanese imaginary

Sanxia was a new place for me. Even when I was living in Taiwan, I was quite unfamiliar with Sanxia. I vaguely remember when I was a child going to Sanxia's historic old street with my dad and other relatives and having delicious traditional desserts. Today, Sanxia Old Street still stands and runs parallel to the Sanxia River. It was one of my favourite walking routes during my stay. I remember walking on the winding and narrow roads and being greeted by elders. They told me the streets were built to zigzag because it makes it easier to catch a thief and also prevents ghosts from entering the village, since in their belief, ghosts can only travel in a straight line. The area of the old Sanxia contains many hidden stories like this, tucked away in the twists and turns of how the place was formed. Many of these stories are held and passed on informally; they provide clues to the long displacement and dispossession of Indigenous Peoples in the area, and the layers of occupation whose origins can be traced to the 17th century Han settlement from Fujian. The old Sanxia also bears witness to successive important historical movements, local political struggles and community solidarity, as well as the evolution of industries and the interaction between humans and the natural world.

Sanxia Old Street today is a bustling tourist destination, remodelled in the past decade in order to revitalize its commercial and historical attractions. Walking along the old street, one can taste the famous local desserts and experience traditional plant-based Indigo tie-dye, but one can also take home souvenirs that are available at any tourist destination and are supposed to evoke an image of Taiwan. This process of revitalization is not a unique case in Taiwan. In fact, the government of Taiwan has initiated various local cultural projects and community revitalization plans since the 1990s, the goal of which is solidifying a Taiwanese national identity and, at the same time, aiding Taiwan's struggle for a foothold internationally (Henley, 2011; Lu, 2002). Such efforts are also influenced by and often in conflict with many cultural and environmental activists at the grassroots level, who have been mobilizing demonstrations and forming organizations in the hope of preserving local cultures, traditions, and environments that are rapidly fading due to the effects of the multiple layers of colonization in Taiwan and the global assimilation resulting from capitalist development (Lu, 2002). Indigenous struggles are amongst these movements; as in

Canada, they draw attention to land, land use, and self-determination as the central issue, and they challenge the assumptions and motivations of Taiwan's progressivism.

A visual and visceral way of illustrating Taiwan's complicated colonial past is to travel south from Sanxia to the west side of Tainan City[1] and physically walk through the back alleys. One may experience profound confusion as traditional Dutch forts, Japanese tea houses and Chinese style dwellings sit together side by side in the midst of modern Taiwanese buildings, all looking out on the Formosa Strait[2]. Tainan City memorably evokes the multiple waves of the island's deep colonial past and present. Indigenous people have been on this island since almost eight thousand years before any colonial settlements (Taiban et al., 2020). In the 17th century, the Dutch East India Company established a commercial and military post at today's Anping, Tainan, and opened the island to mass Han immigration and settlement, thus beginning a long history of colonization, Chinese settlement and Indigenous struggle (Henley, 2011). The Dutch colony was later defeated by Chinese imperialists during the last stage of the Ming Dynasty in 1661, setting up the first period of Han Chinese rule in Taiwan. In 1895, Indigenous people and Han settlers of Taiwan found themselves colonized by Japan as a result of the Treaty of Shimonoseki sanctioned by the Qing Empire. After fifty years of resistance and assimilation, Taiwan was taken over by the Chinese Nationalist Party, Kuomingtang (KMT) (Lu, 2002) .[3] Taiwan's colonial histories often meant rapid shifts of political power and identity. This hybrid legacy, layered with more recent conflicts over obtaining international recognition and increasing social and ecological unrest, has pushed people of various social sectors to grapple with pressing issues of identity, power, and place.

[1] Tainan City is located in southwest Taiwan. Tai-nan translates literally as South of Taiwan.

[2] More popularly known as Taiwan Strait. The name Formosa Strait is used here to show the Portuguese influence in Taiwan. The name *Ilha Formosa*, beautiful island, was given to Taiwan when Portuguese explorers sighted Taiwan in the 1500s.

[3] This very brief narrative of Taiwan's colonial history is far from an exhaustive account, but I hope it gives a glimpse into the complex history and process of cultural formation in Taiwan.

Figure 1: 400 years of Taiwan Colonial History (Taiban et. al., 2020)

In her book *Politics of Locality: Making a Nation of Communities in Taiwan*, anthropologist Hsin-Yi Lu (2002) recounts in detail how the formation of the Taiwanese national imaginary operates in and through local places. Taiwan has been experiencing high levels of uncertainty and complexity with its national and international identity. In every era of Taiwan's colonization, the colonial power has imposed ways of assimilating the island into its own ideology (Dawley, 2018; Hsu, 2016). When KMT took over, there was no exception. Through what Lu calls a "normative machine" (p. 2), KMT constructed a cultural imaginary that positioned the island as "more Chinese than mainland China" (p. 3) at the time. It was not until the 1990s, as mentioned earlier, after the lifting of martial law due to fervent grassroots movements, that party leaders and presidents started changing their attitude and adopting a more Taiwan-centric tone. This shift coincided with former president Lee (1988–2000) declaring that Taiwan and China should be treated as a "special state-to-state relationship" (Lu, 2002, p. 3).

Since Lee's remark, "nation-building" has become one of the popular discourses of Taiwan. However, nation-state identification is not the only source of Taiwan's identity crisis— the impact of capitalist globalization means that, in order to secure its international position, Taiwan needs to find ways to distinguish itself from other East Asian countries. Under these pressures, place becomes "a vehicle for negotiating the paradoxes of identity" (Lu, 2002, p. 4). In the same way, revitalization of local cultures becomes the means by which a state and capitalist apparatus seeks to construct a "progressive" national identity that would put Taiwan on the map as economically and culturally competitive (p. 19). Lu contends that the rise of Taiwan's place-based movements, starting in the 90s, was triggered by a combination of "the transformation of the state power structure, the global awareness of the importance of place, and the competition between Taiwan and its neighboring countries for monetary and cultural capital" (p. 16). Place in Taiwan, as elsewhere, exists in a constant tug of war between globalization and localization, nationalism and localism, progress and tradition.

Nevertheless, Lu sheds a more hopeful light on these issues by recognizing the potential of place to generate “spaces of hope” (Harvey, 2000). Place evokes haunting memories and emotions. In the Taiwanese context, these manifestations might be absorbed into a national-cultural discourse through fixed local heritages and traditions. But, as Massey (1994) suggests, place cannot be pinned in stasis and the provocation of memories and feelings cannot be fully contained by a constructed national identity. During her year-long ethnographic research in four different towns in Taiwan, Lu found:

> The discursive formulation of local differences is usually predicated on some experiential, unnamable, and elusive, place-based attachments. It is as if pre-figurative attachments prevailed in every place throughout Taiwan, anticipating the emergence of a pluralist state discourse (2002, pp. 23-24).

For me this confirms that experiences that are deeply situated in lived places are a potential source of challenge to the constructed hegemonic territorial imaginary that the nation-state seeks to normalize (Appadurai, 1988; Lu, 2002; Massey, 1994; McKittrick, 2006). In this way marginalized communities and grassroots organizations in Taiwan can create spaces to contest and push back against the capitalist model of unlimited growth on an ecologically deteriorating island and the nation’s “neocolonial power” that continues to “[suppress] its marginal groups in its inner colony” (Lu, 2002, p. 15; also see Chen, 2010).

Taiwan as settler colonial state

Here I want to unequivocally frame Taiwan as a settler colonial capitalist state that is also characterized by post-colonial struggle. Many of the place-making projects at the local level are attempts to find a collective national identity as well as a nationalism built on collective Taiwanese ideals. Nationalism here is complicated, as it is “a force forged in response to colonial conquest” (Chen, 2010, p. ix); at one and the same time it is a successor to colonial discourses and a way to move the post-colonial nation towards a more equal and inclusive future. The danger of the Taiwanese nationalism project is that by neglecting the settler colonial reality while building a national identity, seemingly progressive policies that center on individual human rights can be used as tools of assimilation and contribute to the erasure of cultures that do not fall within the homogenizing narrative.

Additionally, each wave of colonization does not exist in isolation, and their influences do not dissipate with the retreat of the empire. Post-colonial countries, although independent, rely on the continued existence of structures set up during colonial rule. In Taiwan's case, the current settler colonial formation has benefitted from and adopted the infrastructures of former colonizing strategies, particularly the Japanese colonization (Simon, 2011). When KMT took over Taiwan, they adopted the Japanese way of organizing Indigenous people, deepening their segregation and continuing the erasure of indigenous presence. For example, one common tactic is forcible relocation. The Japanese government would force the relocation of Indigenous communities to lower elevations or more accessible areas in order to have more direct control. This was done in response to several uprisings by Indigenous people in which they used higher elevation to their advantage in resisting Japanese rule. The current colonial state has continued this tactic, as we will see in the case of Kucapungane (Huang, 2018). The Taiwanese colonial state is also a devoted participant in global capitalism. Therefore, the current colonial formation has also been mediated through by the drive for expansion and profit.[4] Settler colonial capitalism manifests in tangible material realities that are evident in further disenfranchisement of the rural working class, dispossession of Indigenous people, and exploitation of migrant workers, for example. Explicitly naming Taiwan as a settler colonial capitalist nation enables us to critically examine these realities and formulate strategies to undo them.

Given this pattern of control over Taiwan changing hands repeatedly in the past, it is easy to rationalize its present situation as leaving this colonial history behind (Huang, 2018). This overlooks the realities of the continuation of colonial control by the state of the "Republic of China" (Taiwan's official name). Additionally, although many Han settlers also became colonial subjects along with Indigenous people during the Japanese colonization and KMT rule, it is too easy to miss the complicity in which "the same people both constituted and were subjected to colonial projects" (Dawley, 2018, p. 253) and the responsibility and work that come with that subjectivity and positionality.

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4 In fact, participation in the global capitalist system accelerated the homogenization of people in the island. According to historian Evan N. Dawley (2018), in the earlier stage of settlement, each group of Han Chinese settlers remained largely distinct on the basis of their origin and ethnicity. It is not until they started participating in global trade during the time of western expansion that they started defining themselves as a more homogeneous group based in Taiwan and intensified their efforts to take over Indigenous land.

As a society, Taiwan is still dealing with the aftermath of the Japanese colonization and the violence that happened at the time. While that is very important work, focusing on it in isolation can distract attention from the complex colonial nature of the structures that govern Taiwan today. The legacies of the Japanese period have lasting and ongoing damaging consequences for Taiwanese society, and have to be understood as an intrinsic part of contemporary struggles over place, identity, and justice under the current Republic of China colonial rule. Additionally, as mentioned above, Taiwan has been positioning itself as a progressive nation in order to gain a foothold internationally, and some of the policies and discourses associated with this effort tend to be top-down and geared toward an appealing façade of multiculturalism, diversity, and inclusion without further unpacking the layers of power fueling oppressions that are perpetuated through these new "progressive" policies. Lastly, as the struggle for democratic autonomy against authoritarian China gains momentum, important and interesting conversations are happening about what it means to be "Taiwanese." I believe people on this island are at an important historical crossroads. Now it's time to link the international struggle with the struggles at home and build internal solidarity.

Indigenous struggles for decolonization have an important role to play in this process. Shortly after my third visit to Taiwan, representatives of different Indigenous groups published a collective response to the Chinese President on his statement that Taiwan has always been a part of the Chinese State:

> …before the Indigenous peoples exercise their collective self-determination rights, no government, political party, or organization may negotiate with other forces and countries to incorporate the traditional territories of the Indigenous peoples into the territory of other countries or become the scope of control by other countries. This is our determination to protect our motherland. The Indigenous peoples of Taiwan have persisted for thousands of years and will continue to do so ("'This is Sacred Space,'" 2019; see full text in the Appendix).

As this text helps make clear, the struggle for Taiwan's democratic autonomy is complex and nuanced. As Amis Indigenous activist Namoh Nofu Pacidal reminds us, the struggle for Taiwan's self-determination needs to be predicated on the self-determination of Indigenous people (Nofu Pacidal, 2016). When positioning Taiwan independence in this direction, Taiwanese queer activist and scholar, Wen Liu, points out that it can also challenge the structure of Han ethno-colonialism and "necessitates a politics of

decoloniality that builds alliances across the dispossessed, impoverished, queer, and migrant community" (Liu, 2021, p. 376).

To do this requires us to continue to learn from and learn to build solidarity with various communities that are fighting from the margin. Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities in Taiwan have been calling out the violence of the structure of settler colonial capitalism. Although they may not use this term to name the source of their oppression, at the heart of each struggle is a fight for justice and autonomy, and a pedagogical program that centers place as the foundation of relationship, learning and collectivity. For me, they are examples of radical pedagogy of place.

For the rest of the chapter, we will journey to Rinari Township in Pingtung in Southern Taiwan. As I mentioned earlier, during my third visit to Taiwan in 2018 I conducted field work in three different places. Rinari was the first place I visited. After Rinari, I went to Su'ao, Yilan County, in Northeast Taiwan, and then Fengtian, Hualien County, in Eastern Taiwan. Originally, I chose these three places because I was interested in the outdoor and place-based experimental programs in the elementary schools in these communities. However, as my understanding shifted I began to focus more on the way that place as a whole could be seen as a radical educational project, rather than limiting my research to the school programs. Rinari was the one place that I was invited into the community and spent a significant amount of time with the people and place there. I also want to especially highlight and centre Indigenous voices which are largely absent in the other two communities.

Nevertheless, what is written here is mediated through my own understanding, intentions, and theorization. Highly aware of my own positionality, I wanted to make sure I did no harm and the work that is generated is not extractive but can help fuel the struggle for liberation. Learning directly from communities on the ground also helps move away from romanticizing community life as a self-contained and "happy" entity, and it facilitated a cultivation of my own relationship with the land, place, and people in Rinari.

Some thoughts on decolonial research ethics

It is important for me to think about research ethics in a relational way and move away from the institutional method of assuming neutrality, ticking boxes and signing consent forms that release researchers from responsibilities and disrupt grounded relationship building. A crucial factor in my work in Rinari was that I received a personal introduction to the community from Hui-Nien Lin, a faculty member in National Pingtung University who works primarily with Indigenous communities in the South of Taiwan. She also has been an Indigenous land rights activist who uses her academic space and work to support Indigenous movements. We met in an education conference in 2014 and bonded over our shared commitment to decolonization, community organizing, and academic activism. Hui-Nien has had years of relationship with the communities in Rinari and has been a part of developing a land-based education curriculum and advocacy that brings light to the inherently unjust nature of disaster recovery policies in Indigenous communities. She was an important conduit and bridge in how I built a relationship with the community, as the community trusts her and the people she introduces to them.

Honoring transnational feminist methodology criteria and decolonizing research principles, before starting my time at Rinari, Hui-Nien took me to the village to meet with community members and school staff, so we could get to know each other and talk about how both I and my research can be a part of the work they are doing. We wanted to ensure that we were following their protocols and centering their needs, so that the research would not be extractivist but useful for their movement (see Datta, 2018; Toomey, 2022). I was immediately met with hospitality and open arms. After I explained the journey that I was on, and that I would like to learn how I can contribute to their revitalization work, the community members told me that one of their goals is to get everyone who visits and passes through their community to learn of their struggle and tell it to the world. They were excited that someone who studied abroad would be able to record and share their stories. They also said they would like to see Hui-Nien and I publish academic articles featuring their fight for self-determination and land rights.

During my time spent at Rinari, as well as learning about the community's struggle, I also worked occasionally as an interpreter when the village received international visitors. I was honored that I was able to contribute this way, and also fortunate, since when acting as interpreter I got to hear their stories in greater depth.

Whenever needed, I also helped out at the elementary school, either to sit in for a teacher when they were a bit short-staffed or being an assistant for outdoor lessons. One of my earliest and most memorable learning experiences in the community came about in this way, as I describe below in a section called “The way home.”

My time in Rinari helped me understand more of the complexities of a radical pedagogy of place in the context of Indigenous struggle. Part of my learning was experiential, but an important role was played by the many conversations I had with community members over my two months there. Doing formal research interviews was secondary to this commitment to centering relationality in the research process. Moreover, the four interviews I did became a process of dialogue and a container where frank and critical reflections on the world could happen for both the participant and researcher. The researcher in this case bares the crucial responsibility to hold space, to be vulnerable, and to be open to questions (Falcon, 2016). We did the interviews either over good meals, late night drinks, or walking and on scooter rides through Rinari. I felt a deep sense of bonding coming out of each conversation. After I left Rinari, I kept in contact with each of my interviewees throughout the writing process, wanting to ensure that what I wrote down was representative of the stories they shared with me and was something they wanted to be recorded in this way.

Of course, my relationship with the community and the community’s own ways of working were still embedded in the context of colonialism. One way this made itself felt was through the use of language. Language is a significant obstacle in describing the Indigenous realities of Taiwan. As a language of colonization, Mandarin has been used to impose categories and modes of organization on Indigenous peoples that do not correspond with their own traditions and understandings. Here I provide some notes on Mandarin terms that refer to geographical divisions and Indigenous identities and places. As I explain further below, this is not intended to position these terms as neutral. Even though the Mandarin terms may be somewhat accurate in describing Indigenous organization, it is important to understand these terms as the products of “historical-colonial forces” (Hsu, 2016, p.76). I hope this acknowledgment of the coloniality of language, in this case Mandarin Chinese, can contribute to identifying the gaps of understanding inherent in its use and support the continuing work of reclaiming Indigenous languages.

Briefly described, the current administrative division of Taiwan consists of special municipalities (直轄市/ zhí-xiá-shì centrally controlled), cities (市/shì) and counties (縣/xiàn), and within cities and counties are townships (鄉/Xiāng), villages (村/Cūn or 里/Lǐ) and neighbourhoods (區/Qū). Since the arrival of KMT, this division has been changed four times, redefining the China-centric idea of “province” and upgrading counties experiencing greater population growth.

In Mandarin Chinese, the different Indigenous groups are referred to as 族 Zu, a term akin to “nations” in the way that word is used by Indigenous Peoples in so-called Canada, and the various communities are called 部落 Bulou. Both Zu and Bulou are often translated as “tribe” in English, creating misunderstanding; Bulou is more of a tribal community. This has been the primary way Indigenous people socially organize themselves historically (Hsu, 2016). In order to avoid this misunderstanding, here I will be using the communities’ traditional name and also the Mandarin terms directly when it comes to Indigenous communities and groups.

It comes as no surprise that the administrative division often does not correspond to people’s experiences with place. It is also at great odds with Indigenous traditions of self-organization. The installation of the official division into Indigenous communities has created conflicts and power struggles within Bulou community life, leading to erosion in traditional governance and the status of elders (Simon, 2011). This was evident during my time at Rinari. However, as place- and land-based experiences seldom coincide with colonial geographical divisions, this reinforces my conviction that paying radical attention to place has the potential to push back on artificial divisions and borders that structurally control people’s movements and self-understandings (Walia, 2013).

Some of the complexities of working relationally in a colonial context are illustrated by an incident that occurred during my stay in Rinari. For my birthday, Hui-Nien came to Rinari to take me on a day trip to visit another tribal community. Halfway to our destination, I got a call from the host that I was staying with, asking me if Hui-Nien had accidentally driven over the peanuts that the elder living across from us was drying on the ground. Hui-Nien reassured me that it was not her car that drove over the peanuts, so we did not think much of it and went on with our day. When we got back to

Rinari, my host told me the elder had gone to the local representative to complain about the outsider tourist destroying her livelihood. My host said this was not a good situation as the village's internal political struggle had come into play. The elder was not a supporter of the village's tourism program, which was supported by the traditional leadership, and her complaint could rekindle a wider conflict in the community.

The incident was eventually resolved when we reached out to a friend of ours in the village. With her mediation, we were able to offer an apology and compensation in the form of a red envelope. Although we were not the culprits who destroyed the peanuts, both Hui-Nien and I felt greatly responsible, as we both understood that our presence as settler outsiders had stirred up an unnecessary drama that had the potential to deepen some of the existing divides within the community. This is the inherent risk we run as researchers with our kind of positionality, even if we are guided by the principles of decolonial research.

Learning from Rinari

Such experiences still lay in the future when, a few days after the Lunar New Year celebration (which I spent with family members for the first time in many years), Hui-Nien came to pick me up to head to Rinari for my introduction to the community. Rinari sits on top of a hill and is now home to three bulou communities, *Makazayazaya*, *Tavalan*, and *Kucapungane*. This is not the original home of these three bulou. They were relocated here after the devastating typhoon, Morakat, brought floods and severe landslides to southern Taiwan in 2009. As I describe below, the process of relocation was problematic on many levels.

The three bulou belong to two different Zu, Paiwan Zu (Makazayazaya, Tavalan) and Rukai Zu (Kucapungane). Traditionally Rinari is situated on the land of the Paiwan Makazayazaya People. Historically, Paiwan and Rukai were in an oppositional relationship, but after the typhoon they came together for mutual aid and survival. Respecting that this is traditionally Makazayazaya land, Tayalan and Kucapungane did not settle in Rinari until Makazayazaya had chosen their location first, resulting in Makazayazaya being located to the northeast, Kucapungane northwest, and Tayalan to the south (personal communication, Daki, March 13, 2018). Because the land had previously been taken from the Makazayazaya people and was owned by the Taiwan

Sugar Company, it has to be purchased in order to relocate the people there. Each family was relegated to a two-floored wooden house built by World Vision Taiwan and commissioned by the government (Hsu, 2016). Although the houses are used by the families themselves, the government owns the land and property. There is also no other land for people to build additional housing or practice land-based activities.

The devastating results of natural disasters are often the product of a long-term and continuing "unequal distribution of socioecological conflicts caused by a modern economic system driven by the industrial revolution and colonization" (Huang, 2018). For example, years of capitalist exploitation of the land in the form of logging, industrial agriculture and rapid urban development have stripped the land of its ability to withstand a natural disaster, such as typhoon or earthquake, resulting in more serious landslides and flooding. Disaster recovery is a continuation of the process. Although done in the name of delivering people out of danger, "relocation" as a form of disaster recovery extends colonial control by creating and deepening further the dependency of Indigenous people on the State and on large service- and charity-centered non-profit organizations, through a top-down decision-making process that excludes the people most affected and often involves the callous homogenization of different Indigenous groups.

In my interview with Daki, a resident artist of Tavalan village, he described his experience of the Morakot Typhoon. He was not at home when the typhoon hit, as he was doing an art show in Taichung. Because the typhoon destroyed one of the main routes to get back to the bulou, he had to canoe back home, feeling desperate and expecting the worst. To his surprise, when he got back to the community, people were enjoying themselves and making traditional pork barbecue on slates as they have always done. He suddenly realized—of course everyone is OK. They are the people of this land and for millennia they have experienced typhoons and other natural disasters, relying on the wisdom of their ancestors to guide them in how to live on this land. As he explains it, "The typhoon disaster didn't really happen to my people when the typhoon came. It happened when the government intervention started" (Daki, personal communication, March 13, 2018).

Once the government intervened and deemed the land too dangerous to live on, the government turned Daki's people into climate refugees. Their journey from self-

reliance to dependency began as they had to fight each other for the limited food and resources at their temporary refugee camp. Daki said he had never seen his people acting selfishly prior to the time they spent in the temporary refugee camp before settling in Rinari.

Disasters and disaster recovery processes are inherently political and social, and they need to be understood in "temporal/historical and spatial contexts" (Huang, 2018, p. 384). Without centering Indigenous self-determination and safety, natural phenomena like disasters become opportunities for the colonial state to deepen Indigenous disfranchisement. In fact, interventions resulting in rapid urbanization and displacement mediated through disaster recovery are often more easily justified (Huang, 2018). This process can be described as disaster colonialism (Bonilla, 2020; García López, 2020; Lin & Sasala, 2022). Typhoon Marakot offered an opportunity to solve the "Indigenous problem" through forced relocation of different Indigenous communities from villages which were too remote for the government to control. In the long term, this furthers the process of assimilation as people are distanced from their land-based practices and traditions.

Such stories of displacement are typical of Taiwan's continuing colonial rule. More important for my purposes, however, are stories of resistance—in this case, of how Indigenous people made Rinari their home and found ways to ensure the survival of the land, their peoples and culture. Although I spent time with people from all three bulou, I spent the most time in Kucapungane. Therefore, in this chapter I will mainly share lessons learned and gifted to me during my time with Kucapungane.

Arriving in Kucapungane

Even though all three bulou experienced displacement and dispossession, Kucapungane provides a specific example of a long history of state-sanctioned displacement. Within a period of little more than 30 years, Kucapungane went through two episodes of displacement (Hsu, 2016). Kucapungane's ancestral home is located at 950 metres elevation, in a place known colonially as Old Haocha. In 1978, the government relocated the people to New Haocha at the foot of the mountain, on the south bank of the Ailiao River—the town later destroyed by typhoon Morakot. The reason given for the first relocation was the government's inability to provide adequate

healthcare, education, and job opportunities so high up in the mountains. At the same time, a significant number of bulou members were moving out into more urban areas. In my time with one of the elders who had lived in both Kucapungane's ancestral home and New Haocha, she said that she never really wanted to move to New Haocha but was persuaded that this move would be beneficial to the younger generations. Although she did not really like New Haocha, at least she was closer to home and had more land to work on. She is concerned that children now are less and less familiar with the land and their traditions that arise from the land (In'na, personal communication, March 3, 2018).

Since their second relocation, Kucapungane has been actively reclaiming their ancestral land as well as fostering ways of survival at Rinari. During my time there I was able to interview, observe, and be a part of their newly developed visitors' program called the Shoes-off Village 脫鞋子部落, that aims not only to provide an income but also a venue to educate visitors in what it means to be Kucapungane. I also had the utmost honour to visit Kucapungane's ancestral home and learn about their reclamation work firsthand. Recently, in 2016, the slate style building in Kucapungane's ancestral home had been recognized by the UN's World Monuments Fund.[5] Although it came with certain restrictions, this meant that certain public resources should go to the Kucapungane people to maintain and restore the village.

When Hui-Nien and I drove up the hill into Rinari for the first time, we came in from the northwest, passing the Kucapungane bulou first. The wooden houses came into sight, each decorated with slates and traditional patterns. The front porch is a sacred place for Kucapungane people. It is where ceremonies and celebrations happen, so the porch is always kept clean and no shoes are allowed in it. This is why they decided to name their tourism program the Shoes-off Village. As we turned into the main road, a beautiful small red field lined the side of the road. It was millet, a resilient grain that is one of the main staples of both Paiwan and Rukai people in that region.

Sitting in the middle of Rinari is their public elementary school, Evergreen Lily Elementary School (長榮百合國小), attended by children from all three bulou. Hui-Nien took me there to meet with the principal, as we had been communicating about the

[5] Although outside the scope of the current chapter, I think it's important to have a conversation on the impacts of international funds and recognition such as this.

possibility of me staying at the school during my fieldwork. The original plan was that I would stay in their dormitory for alternative service soldiers, but later with permission I would move into Kucapungane as a guest. Because of its location and as a place people from all three bulou interact, the school has come to be treated as a “neutral” ground when conflicts between bulou happen or when a major decision needs to be made together. The school is also one of the few “experimental schools” in Taiwan, a status granted by the Ministry of Education to give the school freedom to be creative with their curriculum. Therefore, it has developed a robust Indigenous practice-based curriculum, where children are learning their languages and cultural practices alongside the nationally mandated curriculum. Although the programs, systems, and ecology of the school warrant a full discussion in their own right, that is unfortunately outside of the focus of this chapter. However, it is through the school’s field trip program to take their fifth and sixth graders to Kucapungane’s ancestral home that I had the chance to accompany them, both as a guest and as a support teacher. For many of the students from Kucapungane, this would be their first time setting foot in their ancestral home.

The way home: reclaiming the ancestral land

To get to Kucapungane’s ancestral home is not a simple journey. It takes eight hours, first trekking alongside the Ailiao River and then hiking up a mid-range mountain to 950 metres above sea level. Since the community’s displacement in 1978, there has not been any official road opened to Old Kucapungane. In recent years, many elders and members of Kucapungane have worked together to open a few routes for people to go back to their land. A Kucapungane elder known as Little Hunter (小獵人) has been residing in Kucapungane’s ancestral home with his partner as part of the reclamation movement and for him, it is the place of home and comfort.

This trip took place the second day after I arrived in Rinari, before I had even had any chance to meet anyone from the Kucapungane bulou. I was invited by the principal to join this trip because they needed extra hands with the students. In the morning, after checking that everyone had the proper gear and food for our journey, we rode on the back of four pick-up trucks to the riverbank of Ailiao. I was assigned to a group of eight students, along with an outdoor educator who came as support. This was the first time I met any of the students. We were mutually curious about each other and had to get to

know each other rather quickly as we would be taking care of each on our long hike. I was packed with emotions—nervousness, excitement, worry, doubts. On the one hand, I felt I had not spent enough time learning the proper protocol to be going to a place considered sacred by the Kucapungane people; on the other hand, I didn't have actual experience hiking Taiwan's mountain trails as an adult, let alone being responsible for eight children while doing so. The night before I called up my dad to come meet me so he could help me get ready for the journey. I was remembering all the river trekking and hiking trips that I took with my father when I was young. I could hear my dad saying, "We have done water trekking many times in the Ailou River. You just don't remember it!" I hoped my body would remember.

The pick-up trucks took us as far as they could drive on the riverbank. Before we got going on foot, Rukai elders and the chief of the bulou burned tobacco and gave thanks to the ancestors for the journey. This was a historic and emotional day, as there hadn't been any presence of children in Kucapungane's ancestral home for many decades; for most of the students, this would be their first visit to their ancestral land, the land where their people came from and where many of the stories that they grew up listening to took place.

After the ceremony, we began our journey along the riverbank, once in a while wading through shallow streams. Halfway through, we started noticing more and more boulders on the riverbank. One of the teachers asked, "Do you know where we are right now?" As I was puzzling over this question, one of the students from my little group responded, "We are at New Haocha." The student then turned and said to me, "I used to live here." Similar comments came from a few other students in my group. "We used to be neighbours," one student said pointing to his groupmate. At that moment, I realized that we had been walking on top of what was New Haocha Village, where many of the students lived before the landslide submerged it in 2009. We also walked past the remnant of the church roof, the tallest building in New Haocha. Beneath the surface of the riverbank lay a whole village, including their sacred burial site.

Nothing more powerfully conveys the visceral effects of displacement than standing on top of what used to be homes. This moment also embodied a humbling lesson, to pay attention to the stories that are not apparent, erased (literally washed away and buried in this case) or hidden. And yet another story was also revealing itself

at the same time, as one of the students commented, “But now, I am glad we are going back to Kucapungane’s ancestral home so I can get to know the place of my ancestors.”

Along the riverbank, stacked stones gave us guidance to where the route up the mountain could be found. Following the markings and the guidance of the elders that came with us, we finally arrived at the beginning of the ascent. Four and half hours later, now a very tired and hungry group, we arrived at our first rest stop, a workshop where the Kucapungane members and elders used to rest as they worked on the trail and on various repairs in the village. The students were in good spirits. On the way up, they were a bit rowdy and didn’t seem to be fazed by the constant upward climbing. At the workshop Little Hunter came to meet us. He would accompany us through the rest of the journey as it was not as straightforward as the first part.

After lunch, we continued upwards. Climbing up the narrow and winding path, on one side a steep mountain wall and on the other nothing but down, with eight rambunctious children in front of me, every step became intentional and reflective. The path we were walking on signified the Kucapungane People’s determination to finding their way back to their land. Carved out to impose the least harm, the trail was not intended for leisure or ambition; it expressed a commitment and connection to the land that cannot be severed.

As the elevation changed, our natural companions also changed. To my surprise, there were more and more coffee plants appearing. Little Hunter explained to us that coffee in fact had been part of what they cultivated to use and to sell, for a time longer than he had been on the earth. As we got higher we were able to see further into the land and the intricacy of the mountains ranged one beyond another, as Little Hunter pointed out the territories of different Indigenous communities and described their sometime rivalrous history with each other. At this point, while remaining in a continuous state of awe and humility, I was also feeling the limitations of my physical ability; all I could concentrate on was my own rhythmic steps going one, two, one, two. Whenever the kids stopped and talked to each other I would get a little bit annoyed at them for breaking my rhythm, but I also admired their energy.

After eight hours and a little change, after many uphills, little water holes, and the company of eagles, the sun was beginning to set when we saw the entrance to

Kucapungane's ancestral village, a slate village built and formed on the hilly slope. At the entrance, Little Hunter burned tobacco and thanked the ancestors for bringing the children home safely. As the support teachers began sorting out the logistics of our overnight stay, I saw the group of Kucapungane children hugging each other and shouting, "We are home!"

Learning radical hospitality in the Shoes-off Village

Even though it was a short three-day trip, the journey to Kucapungane's ancestral home connected me with a few Kucapungane members and elders and we formed a lasting relationship. I was overwhelmed by their openness, generosity, and hospitality. After we returned to Kucapungane in Rinari, I sat down with my new friend Salalabe at her front porch over a few glasses of wine and a bowl of peanuts. Salalabe is a fitness trainer who came back to Kucapungane after years of working in Taipei. She was part of the wave of young people to return to her bulou. We learned about each other's life stories. I was particularly taken by Salalabe's life experiences as an Indigenous woman from Taiwan traveling the world, making a dent in the fitness industry in Taipei. She explained her motivation to come back home: "But I felt more and more that that's not who I am. Every time I come back to my bulou, I am drawn to stay, especially when I felt my bulou was facing difficulties. I want to come back to where my people are. My father always tells me when I return to the bulou, I leave my city way of life outside" (personal communication, March 2, 2018). In our chat, I felt her commitment to honouring her traditions and identity as well as being with her people to ensure a flourishing future.

In my short time in Kucapungane, I was able to participate in community life as well as act as a resource, such as being a translator for their tourism program, The Shoes-off Village. In this way I learned more about the unfair colonial restrictions that were imposed with the relocation to permanent housing in Rinari after the typhoon. In order to receive the permanent housing, each household was obligated to sign a "three-way contract" (三方契約) with the government and the charity that was donating the housing. This contract specifies the terms and conditions of accessing housing. First, community members only have "use rights" to the house. This means they cannot engage in any economic activity in the house, and the government ultimately owns the

land that the buildings are on. Residents are also prohibited from building on to their current house, for instance to add rooms for the next generation. Second, the contract did not allocate any space for traditional land-based practices, such as planting millet and other traditional crops that people depend on. Many of the Kucapungane elders have to rent farmland from the River Management Office or find other ways to make a living. Kucapungane member Ngedrelre, who is also the co-founder of the Shoes-off Village program, noted that when the Kucapungane community lost the ability to engage in their land-based practices, they risked losing the important millet culture—a communal culture that values reciprocity, ceremony, and relationship to land and to each other. Without land for planting millet, he saw people starting to assimilate even more to the capitalistic mindset. As a result, many young people had moved to the urban area for work, leaving elders living on their own.

In recent years, there has been a gradual return of young people to the bulou as part of the movement to reclaim culture and identity. When Ngedrelre came back to the community, he found no sense of vibrancy, no sense of belonging to this new place. He saw that the people needed something that not only could bring them income but also would create space to practice their traditions and learn from the elders' wisdom. This is why the Shoes-off Village Program was created. It is a tourism program developed by several young people with elders at Kucapungane. The program uses a home-stay model where visitors board with elders who have empty rooms in their homes. As it has grown, it has become a network of local food services, artisans, and artists in Rinari and expanded to include activities with nearby tourist destinations. When it first started, there were only two families participating. Currently, more than 40 families are part of the home-stay network and others have opened shops or eateries in Kucapungane to accommodate the growing number of visitors.

Although on the surface, the program is to primarily provide income to participating families, at a deeper level the purpose is to address the social issues in their new home, to tell their stories of resurgence, and to practice the traditional communal way of life. On the Shoes-off Village's website[6], they state,

> We welcome you to experience a different journey with us. It is the young people's responsibility to care for their Bulou especially in times of need.

[6] See https://tourist-attraction-rinari-saabaw.business.site/.

> We realized that there are many things lacking in our new place—no space to bury our dead, no job opportunities, and many elders are living alone. There is no land to pass down our Rukai culture that is based on the life principles of co-sharing (共享), co-owning (共有) and co-existing (共存). Therefore, how we continue on *together* is an important question. We hope to incorporate our traditional wisdom into new ideas that can create opportunities for the bulou, so that Rinari is not just where we live, but it is a home in everyone's heart.

Their goal is the collective flourishing of their people. Ngedrelre explains that the model follows their communal tradition where everything is run by everyone together. They use "family" and "home" to frame their treatment of the visitors and the activities the visitors undertake. When each visitor arrives at the Shoes-off Village, Kucapungane members conduct a welcome ceremony to initiate each person into the family. During the ceremony, they tell the story of where their people come from and how Kucapungane people came to Rinari, the injustice and struggle they had to go through. They explain their important front porch culture and tell each visitor that they are now part of the family. While welcoming the visitors to their home, Kucapungane members emphasize that as they are now family, they must treat and respect each other as family and respect the homes of the elders with whom they will stay. In this way they stress the visitors' roles and responsibilities, not as consumers who come to take but people who come to learn and to care. In our interview, Ngedrelre told me:

> This is not a "business" like a hotel or hostel. We have turned away people before when they could not accept the home-stay format and demanded that our elders provide more service…. We wanted to create ways in which we can continue to practice our traditions even with the lack of land. We want our children to have a way to identify with their culture and practice it as they grow up in Rinari. We are finding openings to pass down our bulou culture. Our beloved elders said that they only used to wear their traditional clothing at important times like harvest or weddings, but they are so happy now that they get to wear their traditional clothing every week as they welcome the visitors into the family.

For Kucapungane members, this is not a conventional tourism relationship in which visitors arrive to consume the culture of the "Other." Here Kucapungane people hold their agency and their perspective and ask visitors to see through their eyes, to become a part of their ecology. This is the pedagogical program at the heart of the Shoes-off Village. By grounding the program in their land-based culture and co-owning the operation, Kucapungane people are challenging the exploitative and capitalistic

nature of conventional tourism and finding different ways to enact their place-based practices. Through situating the visitors on the land, Kucapungane people educate settlers and tourists, both domestic and international, about ongoing Indigenous struggles, traditions, and most importantly, what it means to be a responsible guest to the host place and people.

This is a radical practice of hospitality. Here I do not refer to the hospitality industry, although many would classify The Shoes Off Village as part of that industry. Rather I refer to a Taiwanese sense of hospitality, “ren qing wei” (人情味). The usual word for hospitable is “hao ke” (好客), which literally means the willingness to host, but “ren qing wei” invokes a deeper level of human connectedness. Its literal translation is “a taste of human connection.” It connotes a desire for connection and an openness to that connection, a permeability. Ngedrelre said they have always seen this in their elders when young people bring their friends home, no matter the cultural background of their friends. They see it once again through the Shoes-off Village program. He stated, “Ren qing wei is the beauty of Taiwanese Indigenous people. You can find a sense of ren qing wei everywhere in Taiwan and for us this also comes from being a part of the vitality of the land.”

In spending time with Kucapungane members and participating in the Shoes-off Village, I also learned about the conflicts and divisions over the operation of the program. These disagreements highlight the deeply rooted issue of colonialism through the imposed colonial political and land governance structure, which is directly at odds with the traditional governance structure and undermines the authority of the latter. While it wasn’t part of my purpose to dive into the oppositional voices of the tourism program, I want to note the existence of contention so as not to romanticize Indigenous resistance, resilience and community, nor ignore the complex impacts of colonialism on day-to-day life.

Kucapungane continues to be a site of struggle over Indigenous sovereignty and colonial control over land. Recently, the local government has been pushing back aggressively on community members’ use of permanent housing as part of the Shoes-off Village Program. In October 2020, the authorities sent in a bulldozer and demolished the newly built visitor centre. The demolition was met with widespread resistance from

community members and settler allies, but it also revealed the deep-seated issues with the permanent housing program and who has access to land.

Receiving Kucapungane's radical hospitality and participating in place in such a way challenged and changed my internalized nationalistic notion of being a Taiwanese, and gave me a renewed sense of how to be on this land. Being an oversea Taiwanese, I often feel I have to represent this country that is internationally underrecognized and under threat from an authoritarian regime. In the past I would speak about this nation as if we have always been there—that our right of being there is unquestionable, when in fact the current political-legal system has only been on the island for 74 years. The rise of Taiwanese consciousness only really started in the 1990s. Interestingly, when I asked my dad and my uncle how they identify themselves in the Taiwanese context, my dad answered that he is a Chinese who lives in Taiwan, and my uncle referred to himself as a Weishunren (Mainlander Taiwanese), whereas I just see myself as Taiwanese.

Learning from the Kucapungane bulou, I began to develop a different sense of being Taiwanese, and of the obligations that come with being part of the settler class. When I participated in and observed the welcome ceremony to initiate guests into the family, I saw a profound lesson for settlers about our responsibilities and obligations of taking care of the land and its people by supporting and deferring to the leadership and stewardship of Indigenous people—aligning ourselves with their struggle instead of the colonial nation. The ceremony evokes a reciprocal relationship that calls us to respond with humility, gratitude, and appreciation. It is a call for us to continuously challenge our settler entitlement to the island and to the First Peoples of the island.

Participating in the Shoes-off Village also opened my eyes to how and where radical pedagogy of place can be practiced. Their struggle with land and housing reveals that the tentacles of colonial capitalism continue to extend through various processes, including the expansion of land control and the deepening of dependence following natural disasters. By framing disaster recovery through the language of resilience and paternalistic care, attention can be diverted away from what caused the disastrous effects in the first place (Huang, 2018). Through their ancestral land reclamation work and the Shoes-off Village Program, the Kucapungane community has brought this issue to the forefront. By reconnecting the younger generation back to their traditional land through their land-based practices, and by educating settlers and visitors on the

important history of the place and the stories of their people, they continue to assert their agency and cultivate a relationality that moves away from colonial capitalistic ways of relating to place.

Lastly, In Kucapungane, I learned that the theme of returning extends beyond my own journey, especially as I witnessed the children's return to their ancestral home following forcible displacement and land theft. The act of returning in itself is a refusal of this displacement, a resistance to colonial land control, an act of survival, and a reclamation of a sense of belonging that is ancient and cannot be stolen. Witnessing this helped me reflect on my own returning to Taiwan as a settler born to this land and see the different positionalities I hold, including those of an immigrant settler on Coast Salish land and Western educated Han settler on the land of Taiwanese First Peoples. Acknowledging and claiming the latter identity has given me more insight into settler privilege and disruption in Indigenous lives, while being in the more marginalized position of an immigrant has given me a more powerful lens and language to name that privilege and disruption. Learning how to walk in one positionality helps me to grapple with the other, to understand each more profoundly and the responsibilities that come with it.

Chapter 4. Chinatown and the Struggle over Place

I was fortunate to be welcomed into the housing justice movement in Vancouver's Chinatown in 2015. It was two years after I moved to Vancouver, and I had spent that time searching for a place where I could help organize. I felt like all my studying of place-based education and social justice was not meaningful unless it was grounded within communities. At that time, I learned through my union, the Teaching Support Staff Union (TSSU), that there was a housing struggle going on in Chinatown where working-class residents were pushing back against a development application by one of the biggest real estate developers and corporate landlords in Vancouver, Beedie Living. If the development were to go through, it would add a luxury condo tower in the heart of Chinatown, accelerating the already rapid process of gentrification. On the volunteer form, they were especially seeking people who could speak Mandarin or Cantonese to help with translation and communication with the residents. I felt called strongly, as I remembered all the years of struggle as an immigrant with my mother in Belize due to the lack of language access, and I also felt the need to be with people who shared a similar culture with me. I also felt anger at the way the City and developers had been treating Chinese working-class seniors. In some ways, I was looking for a place of belonging in the social justice movement where I could be useful.

Before joining the 105 Keefer St. campaign, I didn't have a strong connection to Chinatown. I had gone there a few times to buy traditional herbs and medicines. I felt like an outsider, not only because I was a newcomer but also because I was Taiwanese. On the other hand, every time I was there I felt a cultural connection and appreciated the existence of Chinatown. I would also notice tour buses and tourists wandering around taking photos of the traditional arch gate or other Chinese-looking décor. I always felt a bit uncomfortable encountering tourists in this type of context, because I grew up in tourist-filled Belize and I never appreciated the racist undertones of their gaze. I observed the same here in Chinatown.

Chinatown historically and presently has always been defined against a backdrop of colonialism, capitalist gain, and white supremacy. Vancouver's Chinatown was formed in the context of anti-Asian racism on stolen Indigenous land. It is located on a Squamish site called Luq'luq'i, a name attributed to the groves of beautiful maple trees that were

there before it was clearcut and the community displaced by colonial settlement ("People's Vision", 2017). The conceptualization of "Chinatown" itself was born out of a White supremacist idea:

> [The term Chinatown was used] to designate an undesirable neighborhood characterized by vice and unsanitary conditions and populated by an inferior race. Over time, the stereotypical and mythical images associated with the term became entrenched in the ideology of white Canadians as legitimate interpretations of Chinese culture and Chinese places (Crompton & Leung, 2017, p. 63).

By the mid-1890s, Chinese immigrants and migrant workers for the railroads and other infrastructures of capitalist expansion found themselves restricted to settling within the boundaries of this neighbourhood (Anderson, 1991). Despite these negative circumstances and connotations, however, the residents built Chinatown into a place of survival and shelter from white supremacist violence. The history of Chinatown is not a merely a history of exclusion or a picturesque ethnic enclave; it is a history of resilience and solidarity, as well as "indebtedness" (Phung, 2015) to the Indigenous people. Thus, as a site of struggle, Chinatown teaches not only about the nature of oppressive systems, but about the survival of a community against and despite these systems. This is a place that actively goes against the definition put upon the community through a colonial and capitalist lens. As activist Jannie Leung writes,

> Chinatown defies the notion that it exists only as a historical symbol. Chinatown continues to be a place of belonging and cultural continuity. It exists to ensure our elders are cared for and that their knowledge and wisdom is being passed on to our generation. Chinatown's presence continues to be a challenge to white supremacy, providing a place to resist loss of language and culture from assimilationist pressures in Vancouver. (2017, p. 69).

Chinatown is where I learned that in radical relationship to place lies a pedagogical program, whether it is consciously or unconsciously cultivated. To reiterate, radical relationship to place is a way of living and learning about place, people, and land from the root where the vitality of the community comes from, against and despite what settler colonialism fabricates. As Simpson (2017) emphasizes, "Radical requires us to critically and thoroughly look at the roots of the settler colonial present" (p. 48), but she also grounds this radical project in "a way of living that [is] full of community.… A way of living that [considers], in a deep profound way, relationality" (p. 22). For me, this involves a balance between critique, reflection, relationship, and action. Then the pedagogical

program emerges through people engaging and living radically with place history, present, and the collective imagination of what a just and flourishing future for all looks like. Here in Chinatown was where I first experienced a radical pedagogy of place and began my own theorization of what that is.

In this chapter, I offer a decolonial understanding of Chinatown and the complicated sense of place it invokes for me as an immigrant, organizer, settler, and person of Chinese ancestry. I will first present an analysis of Asian/Chinese racialization. I do so by situating this process alongside the dominant narratives fueled by colonialism and continued gentrification of Vancouver's Chinatown in the name of “revitalization” and “development.” This framing allows us to observe the radical place-based practices mobilized by community members and organizers in countering this enclosure of both Indigenous land and a marginalized community, drawing from the experiences during the 105 Keefer Campaign and organizing in the aftermath. This lived place-based praxis not only continues to fight for safety, but it also highlights a sense of conviviality as one of the important cultural resources practiced by the Chinese grassroots and other community members of Chinatown. It is important to note that Chinatown should not be considered as a space exclusively defined by and for Chinese people, as it has always been shared by Japanese, Black, Indigenous, and other marginalized workers and people. Its boundary has been porous and flexible, although the municipally defined border has been limiting and rigid. Lastly, I will reflect on our efforts to align our anti-racist and anti-capitalist struggle with decolonization.

Asian racialization in settler colonial capitalism

On a December afternoon in 2018, a surprisingly sunny day for the usually damp Vancouver winter, a group of us gathered at the intersection of Gore & Keefer to meet Mrs. Kong, a Chinatown resident, and Beverley Ho, a community organizer. Mrs. Kong had lived in Chinatown for more than 30 years. She had also been working with a group of residents, mostly seniors and young people like Beverley and myself, to bring attention to the pressing issue of the encroaching gentrification and displacement of working-class Chinese immigrants in Chinatown. That afternoon Mrs. Kong, with Beverley’s help on interpretation, took us on a short tour around Chinatown and told us stories of her own lived experiences to highlight the rapid changes and impacts due to

gentrification over the past several years. We've come to refer to this as the "gentrification tour."

Mrs. Kong began the tour by saying, "it feels like this city is trying to push us out, to erase us, but we are still here making sure Chinatown is safe for everyone." We walked through Keefer Street onto Main and into a couple of side streets. Mrs. Kong passionately pointed out where she would practice Tai Chi with her friends, as well as her favorite grocery store that had been closed down and was waiting to be turned into a luxury condo. Many other affordable and culturally appropriate groceries, restaurants and business had also been forced to close in recent years, and in their places had popped up hipster coffee shops, artisanal patisseries, and restaurants of "elevated" East Asian street foods. We stopped in front of one of these newly opened restaurants with beef noodle soup as their specialty. Beef noodle soup is one of the local foods of Taiwan, one of my favorite dishes. It was unclear which style beef noodle soup this restaurant had, but it was clearly not the working-class beef noodle soup I grew up with. Mrs. Kong advised us not to support a restaurant like this as it did not serve the people who live in Chinatown.

We finished the tour back on Keefer Street by the Chinese Railway Worker and Veteran Memorial monument, right beside 105 Keefer St., which had been fenced off by the developer. Mrs. Kong emphasized that this was an important place for her in Chinatown because the monument reminded her of the mistreatment Chinese workers faced and the efforts early Chinese immigrants put in to fight for belonging in this country. She lamented that they thought building the railroad and going to war for Canada would ensure that belonging, but years after we were still struggling. However, through her own involvement in the housing struggle at 105 Keefer St., she told us how important it is for the community to come together and raise their voice.

Mrs. Kong's lived experiences and remarks by the Chinese Railway Worker and Veteran Memorial call attention to the specific way Chinese immigrants and their racialization have been positioned in the settler colonial capitalist system. Many Asian American and Indigenous scholars (Tuck & Yang 2012, Day 2016, Wong 2018, Fijikane & Okamura, 2008, Phung 2015, Byrd 2011) have been mapping out the relationship formations underlying settler colonialism. Their formulations take the conversation on settler colonialism beyond the binary relationship between Indigenous peoples and white

settlers to interrogate the roles racialized others play within the system. Amongst these scholars, Iyko Day (2015) contends that the process of racialization is essential and internal to settler coloniality as well as to the other side of the same coin, capitalist expansion. As capitalism seeks to limitlessly expand the market, settler coloniality seeks to seize Indigenous land to be commodified through exploitation of racialized labour. In this conception, settler colonial relations are, as Glen Coulthard (2014) posits, "the inherited background field within which market, racist, patriarchal, and state relations converge" (p. 14). By clarifying the process of hierarchical racial formation within settler colonial capitalism, we can have a more nuanced understanding of racial struggle and its intersection with colonialism, class, and other categories of domination, so that in our fight for justice we can recognize and avoid resistance approaches that may end up perpetuating the structures and processes of settler colonial capitalism.

Based on this analysis, Day (2016) proposes thinking in terms of a triangulation of colonial-capitalist relations, settler-Indigenous-alien, introducing the term "alien" to describe the positionality of those who are neither white settler nor Indigenous. This formulation does not seek to equate the experiences of Black people with those of Asian or other racialized people, but to foreground settler colonialism's inherent need to depend on racialized alien labour, in the forms of forced migration and temporary (i.e. deportable) migrant workers, for its reproduction and the continuation of Indigenous dispossession. Day further emphasizes that these categories are not meant to be fixed but to point out "the role of territorial entitlement that distinguishes them. In this sense, these positions should not be understood as identitarian categories but rather a political orientation to Indigenous land" (Day et. al., 2016, p.10).

With this background, here I will zoom in to dissect the specific ways Asian racialization has manifested and the particular role it holds within the relational system of settler colonial capitalism. I add to this conversation by proposing manipulability and commodifiability as two of the key features of Asian racial formation.

As previously touched on in Chapter 2, Asian racial formation manifests in many stereotypes but here I want to discuss two especially prominent ones: on the one hand, we are the "model minority" succeeding in climbing the ladder of class mobility; on the other hand, we are the "yellow peril" infesting the pure white society with our foreign and savage-like customs. Although praised as successful, we are also perpetually foreign

and can be expelled at any time. The racial imaginary “yellow peril” in English-speaking colonial North America originated in the 18th century when Asian immigrants began arriving in larger numbers as cheap labour (Kawai, 2005). The term conveys fear and the equation of Asian migration with “diseases, vice and destruction” (Day, 2016, p. 7). Early Chinese immigrants to Canada faced extreme legal, spatial, and material limitations, such as the Chinese head tax and the exclusionary Chinese Immigration Act (1923), and, in the case of places like Vancouver, were relegated to the ghettoized Chinatown. This racial imaginary entered a new stage at the end of WWII by positioning Asian immigrants as a “model minority,” able to achieve economic success and become exemplary citizens by virtue of their own hard-working and law-abiding nature. Although yellow perilism and the myth of the model minority may seem to be two distinct historical stages, as Day points out the two stereotypes work together as “complementary aspects of the same form of racialization, in which economic efficiency is the basis for exclusion or assimilation” (2016, p.7). In other words, we should understand these two seemingly oppositional racial imaginaries, one positive and the other negative, as existing in an inseparable dialectical relationship for the maintenance of white supremacist colonial capitalism (Kawai, 2005; Okihiro, 2014).

As a result, people racialized as Asian are relegated to what writer Cathy Park Hong (2021) describes as a “vague purgatory status,” a racial space with the (often illusory) promise of upward class mobility and proximity to whiteness through “voluntary” assimilation, while at the same time living under threat of removal. This creates the conditions for what Harsha Walia (2021) calls a “fantasy of inclusion” entailing high dependency and pressure to buy into the settler colonial state processes. This purgatory state makes the Asian racial role highly manipulable; it can be used to pit against other “less model” racialized groups or to take the blame for capitalist failures, evident in the Vancouver housing crisis and the call for the ouster of Chinese foreign buyers, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic and the rise of anti-Asian violence. It is an insidious design that makes it attractive for many to opt in and self-police, especially when any of us act outside the parameter of a good immigrant. In 2020, after a Filipinx labour organizer gave a CBC interview where she raised concerns about the inadequacy of short-term assistance like Canada Emergency Response Benefit and advocated a longer term solution, she faced strong racist and misogynist blowback with many calling for her deportation. The loudest opposing voices in the campaign were mainly other Filipinx

immigrants saying that she had shamed her immigrant community by being “ungrateful” to the Canadian state (personal communication, Nym, May 2020; Alcuitas & Cabana, 2020).

What this smear campaign reveals is not only the buy-in and the obligatory gratefulness to the colonial state expected of Asian Canadians, but an active concealing of Asian working class struggle and existence, made more urgent and apparent by the global health crisis. Asian immigrants are widely dispersed on the spectrum of class hierarchy, but issues of working-class immigrants, migrant workers, seniors, and refugees are rarely discussed in the mainstream. This concealment allows the continued exploitation of labour power and commodification of Asian culture in the settler colonial capitalist expansion. State policies such as multiculturalism also abet the process of commodification and further colonial exploitation by constructing cultural and racial differences and identities to fit into “unproblematic neat cultural packages” (Valle-Castro, 2021, p. 96) to be consumed and controlled. Canada was the first country to implement multiculturalism as a state policy in 1971, around the time when the narrative of the model minority was proliferating. Both the adoption of multiculturalism and the idea of the model minority convey an end to overtly exclusionary immigration rules and racist treatment such as the Japanese internment camps that caused havoc to the lives of Japanese Americans and immigrants. However, as Walia (2021) points out, state-imposed multiculturalism works in tandem with other racial formations to mask racial hierarchy and elevate nationalistic unity by using only “grammars of culture and ethnicity” (p.194), thus boiling down historical and systemic colonial capitalist violence and expansion into more palatable categories of inclusion, diversity, culture, and identity.

Chinatown has become one of the prime locales for the culmination of these intersecting and interdependent processes. The ongoing gentrification relies on amnesia regarding the existence of working-class Chinese and other marginalized people, making the process of displacement seem easy and inconsequential, while commodifying orientalist ideas of Chinese culture for capitalist gain such as real estate development. Many new condo buildings or luxury businesses going into Chinatown make sure they have a splash of red paint, an auspicious colour in the Chinese tradition, or perhaps a Chinese translation of the business name, but with no working-class Chinese people in sight.

Chinatown as a living terrain of struggle

In 2017, Chinatown working class residents organized to oppose a new City plan, the Chinatown Economic Revitalization Action Plan—or as organizers put it, CRAP (Ho, 2017). This plan used language such as “revitalization” and “preserving Chinatown’s unique heritage,” but in reality, it promised to heighten displacement and further the developer-driven land grab by removing many regulations around development permits, with no requirements with respect to affordable and social housing. It would also further remove community members from the decision-making process. The open houses held by the City to discuss this plan were organized without proper notice to the residents, provided no translation, and took place during Lunar New Year. One of the senior activists, Godfrey Tang, expressed the view that the City’s plan to revitalize Chinatown in reality was a plan for replacement—“replacing Chinatown with another culture” (“People’s Vision”, 2017).

Alongside this resistance to the City plan was the 105 Keefer St. struggle. Since 2012, working-class residents and other community members of the Downtown Eastside had been pushing back against the development of a luxury condo at the site, displaying a strength and rooted presence that could not be erased. The developer, Beedie Living, went through five different iterations in its efforts to gain zoning approval—four required rezoning licenses, as the proposed building exceeded the height restrictions in the area, and one last proposal envisioned a nine-storey building with no social housing—and every proposal was denied. Although the 105 Keefer St. Struggle is popularly portrayed as a fight between the Chinatown “community” and Beedie Living, the struggle was not just about pushing back against the real estate mogul’s profit-making scheme; rather, it helped mobilize a response and resistance to the gentrifying takeover of a historically working-class neighbourhood and to fuel efforts to build a movement for housing and racial justice. It should be pointed out that there isn’t a homogenized Chinatown “community.” In fact, the coalition that came together during the struggle represented different interests including middle- and upper-class Chinatown elites who are pro-development. Here, however, I will be focusing solely on the working-class grassroots and their organizing, as I believe without their collective imagining through intergenerational solidarity and their place-rooted sense of what Chinatown can be and has been, the campaign would not have been possible, and the movement would not

have been started. Focusing on grassroots voices, understandings and experiences of place, and participating directly in the struggle to have them heard and honoured, is part of the process of radical pedagogy of place and building a radical relationship to place.

The grassroots organizing was mainly conducted by two groups—Chinatown Concern Group and Chinatown Action Group. Chinatown Concern Group is made up of elderly Chinatown residents concerned with what has been happening in Chinatown; Chinatown Action Group consists of Chinese diasporic youth, many of whom had a connection with Chinatown during their childhood but do not necessarily live in Chinatown now. While the youth activists studied the systematic causes of Chinatown's erosion, the seniors shared their lived experiences as residents who have been largely isolated and marginalized. The two groups worked together to strengthen, educate, and empower each other. Although each met separately, strategizing meetings were held together and were always in Cantonese and Mandarin interchangeably. The groups themselves provided translation in English, Cantonese, and Mandarin for whoever needed it. During these meetings, we did a power analysis[7] of Vancouver's urban planning and housing process, as well as of Beedie Living's organizational schemes. We also had rigorous discussions concerning our demands and our approach to organizing the neighbourhood. A lot of times, the youth organizers were reminded that although our elders may not have the same academic or political language as us, intersectional analysis of class, gender and race is embodied and emplaced in their lived experiences. I remembered vividly one of our meetings where we were attempting to hold a brief discussion on the fundamentals of capitalism and its manifestations. We used a salad factory as an example, as many of our seniors worked in one. When we started talking about how the employer gains profit by exploiting workers' labour power by means of low wages, one of our seniors raised her hand and said, "If you were Chinese then you got paid even less." Another senior followed, "If you are a woman, you would be asked to perform many tasks that are outside the scope of the job and not be compensated." They went on to tell the room about their own experiences working as racialized women in these places. For them, there was no need for a crash course on capitalism—they had lived through some of the starkest examples of exploitation.

[7] Power analysis, in the sense used in community organizing and in this case housing justice organizing, involves sketching out the existing power dynamics and structures in order to strategize about how and where to target and apply pressure for change.

On the other hand, the youth organizers navigated the arduous city process and the hoops we needed to go through in order to participate in city meetings where decisions would be made with great material consequences for all of us. Accessibility was a struggle, including language. We created channels by using translations, interpretation, trilingual rallies, meetings and gatherings so that our elders could participate in a process that had historically excluded them. There was no translation provided in any city meetings; our youth organizers did the interpretation ourselves by whispering to the seniors (this was typically met by harsh scolding, saying we were disrupting the meeting). At the hearing, our seniors were not allowed more time to speak, even though they had to speak through interpretation which takes longer. We demanded that this change. In the end, although the city did provide an interpreter, we had to sit in a separate room if we wanted to receive interpretation.

Throughout 2016 and 2017, we made numerous house visits and held gatherings to build relationships with more working-class residents, at the same time as ongoing direct actions such as occupying open houses with teach-ins, holding rallies at Beedie's festivities, and organizing panel discussions. All of this culminated in the last hearing of the Vancouver development permit board, where more than 200 people signed up to speak against the development and to emphasize the need to build social housing in Chinatown. As a result, the development permit was denied. This was an incredible victory made possible by grassroots organizing and a deep sense of place that extended to include Indigenous allies and community members of the Downtown Eastside, who also experience marginalization daily. This was a victory made possible with the direct support from Indigenous and unhoused people living in the Downtown Eastside. We cannot separate the struggle in Chinatown from these broader struggles. Organizer Vincent Tao emphasizes, "Only when we dare to cleave Chinatown into a living terrain of struggle between classes can we begin to clear a path of action. We do not need to belong to Chinatown to fight on the side of all those who face their eviction from it" (personal communication, 2021).

The win at the development permit board was really just the beginning and not an end to the movement. Stopping the development was only the initial step in the push for a truly livable and equitable Chinatown. Nonetheless, in the 105 Keefer St. struggle we witnessed the power of collective place-based organizing, while being pushed to

grapple with questions of the larger systems at play and what it means to be in solidarity with Indigenous and community members of DTES.

At the debriefing meeting following our win, one of the seniors stood up and shared that she had not previously believed that anyone would listen to what Chinese immigrants have to say. She thought we should just be quiet, keep our heads down and not make waves, but throughout the campaign, she learned that we have something important to say and when we say it together, we are powerful. Another senior shared that she used to feel isolated and alone in the city. She always thought there was animosity between Chinese and Indigenous community members. But, experiencing support from Indigenous people and other allies from the Downtown Eastside in the 105 Keefer St. fight, she felt we have gained important friendships and that we need to fight for them just as they fought for us.

The process of 105 Keefer organizing initiated our collective journey to learn to align our struggle with Indigenous struggles. This journey includes both our own empowerment as well as repositioning our relationship with the colonial state and with our Indigenous neighbours. We had to learn to recognize our own humanity, re-establish our intergenerational relationships between elders and youth, and find ways to facilitate relationship building and knowledge exchange. Together, we needed to re-envision and negotiate some of our own unquestioned cultural norms and reclaim Chinatown not as a mere ethnic enclave, but as a place of safety, collective care, and connection. We also needed to reclaim the fact that Chinatown has not been an exclusive space only for Chinese people, and that its history includes intimate relationships with neighboring communities.

From conviviality to decolonization

Before joining the 105 Keefer St. fight, I had not known or participated in any progressive Asian spaces, nor worked with an activist group whose member base consisted of people racialized as Asian. I also did not seek out opportunities of this kind. In fact, for a long time I actively avoided Chinese or Taiwanese spaces because of the racism and shame I had internalized over the years and some of the overtly patriarchal practices that still exist in some of these spaces. When I was living in Mexico, my siblings and I were among the handful of East Asian people in the city, and yet when I

saw another Asian person on the street, I would try to avoid their gaze. However, whenever I was able to form a friendship, the connection always felt instant, effortless and comforting. Through these friendships, I felt a sense of mutual understanding and that I no long needed to explain myself. I slowly started to notice that there was a part of me and our community that had been tucked away and never mentioned—not in history lessons, not in books, and not in public celebrations. Or if it was talked about, it was in terms that were either stereotypical, orientalist, or just outright absurd.

Joining the Chinatown struggle became a way for me to experience this aspect of my identity more deeply, and to do so in the context of a radical relationship to place. This provided me with first-hand insight into “a way of living that was full of community,” as Leanne Simpson expresses it (2017, p. 22). Because this has proven to be foundational for my understanding of decolonization as practiced through a radical pedagogy of place, I begin this section by retracing some of the heartfelt encounters I went through as I became a member of the community, before returning to the way our struggle expanded to include solidarity with our Indigenous neighbours and a reckoning with our own complicity and privilege with respect to the colonial capitalist state.

Going to my first Chinatown meeting in 2016 was nerve-racking, intimidating but exciting all at the same time. The meeting was conducted in both Mandarin and Cantonese with people sitting in the circle and different people whispering translation to those who needed it. There were people of a range of ages, from the teen years to seniors who were the same age as my own nai nai. I barely remember the content of that meeting, as at that point I did not have any knowledge or experience with housing justice organizing and urban planning policy. When the meeting ended, an elder, William Lim, approached me. He handed me two luscious eggplants with a beautiful purple shine on them and said, “Hello, Jade. I planted these in my garden, please take some home with you.” I was overwhelmed by a sweet warmth and familiarity that I had not felt in a very long time. In that moment, I knew intuitively that I was with *my* people because this is what we do—we are people who work the land and share the bounty that comes from it. We take care of each other collectively. Without this mutual care, my family and I would not have survived our move to Belize. Back in Belize, since it was difficult to buy the kind of vegetables we are used to eating, my parents and my grandma planted different leafy greens in the gutters to share with other Taiwanese people. Frankly, I often judged my elders for being “busybodies” who were always buying extra things to

give to friends or neighbours. I used to get annoyed that I had to receive different aunties and uncles when they dropped by to give us their gifts. At times this kind of exchange can become a show of extravagance and status; it can be performative and pretentious. But in this moment, I realized its value and how it has been embedded throughout my life.

Throughout my organizing work in Chinatown, I witnessed this collective care being practiced within this context of addressing injustice. It has been a part of the story of how our community has survived and flourished even under the threat of racism and capitalist pressure. Our resistance is grounded in our inherent sense of collectivity, community, and conviviality, in direct contrast to the alienating and individualistic nature of capitalism. During the 105 Keefer campaign, we experienced the power of collectivity organized and harnessed towards direct action and resistance of capitalist pressure. We also began to set up practices and make conscious space in our meetings, actions, and gatherings to facilitate discussions and decision-making processes to allow all of us to imagine what an alternative future can look like in Chinatown, and to grow together as a community of resistance and care. Khasnabish and Haiven (2014) describe this as the development of “radical imagination”, not as an individual possession but as a process to be practiced collectively and co-inhabited through sharing of experiences, stories, and ideas, learning about the past and history and constructing what the future can look like.

In 2017, after two years of hosting teatime discussions and home visits, the seniors and youth organizers put together the *People’s Vision* (2017), a document which outlines a strategy for Chinatown’s social and economic development centered on the needs of marginalized people in and around Chinatown. Throughout this process, in conjunction with the 105 Keefer St. campaign, members also got together to carry out power analyses of the contested narratives about Chinatown, to ensure that our vision is not narrow but includes an understanding of the systemic issues underlying our struggle and to understand where we should apply the pressure of our collective power. But in this section I want to emphasize another side of the process—the way we also created spaces where we could deepen our relationships through social gatherings and feasting. Even though the reality was dire, and people and their homes were constantly facing the threat of removal, through coming together as a community of struggle and accessing our cultural strength we often felt an unequivocal sense of joy. In the title of their book *Joyful Militancy*, Montgomery and bergman (2017) encompass these two important sides

of movement building. I want to extend this to emphasize the capacity and possibility of experiencing joy in the midst of fighting against immense power domination. Joy here does not mean a temporary feeling of happiness, but an ability to affect and be affected, an ability to grow and be changed and be a change agent. This is an emergent and collective process. In our organizing together, we experience day-to-day joy that empowers members of the campaign.

In 2018, we organized a get-together in Solheim Place in Chinatown, where some of our seniors live. We shared food, played games, sang karaoke, and made dumplings together. We also reflected together on what made our victory at 105 Keefer possible and what should be our next steps. The activity of making dumplings together reminded us of the importance and power of collectivity. I was personally quite excited to see and learn the various ways dumplings are folded, as we have people who are from all different parts of China, Hong Kong, and Taiwan. A few of our seniors organized the dumpling making. We were divided into different groups made up of youth, middle-age people and seniors who had spent various numbers of years living on Turtle Island. I couldn't wait to get started.

Growing up in Belize, helping my mom and nai nai make dumplings was a frequent occurrence, as we couldn't buy ready-made dumplings in the stores. I felt like I was being trained by the best chefs in the world to create presentable dumplings. Sometimes after a day of making dumplings my mom would complain that they were a "bad investment" for the chefs, because she spent all day making them but it only took us ten minutes to demolish them. In a way, the act of making dumplings intrinsically connects me back with my mother, my family, and a big part of who I am and my cultural experience. During the process of making dumplings, my mom would share her insight and her stories that I don't usually learn about. It is a way my nainai passes down her wisdom through culinary metaphors to us.

As the ingredients were placed in front of us, dumpling making officially began. While showing off my skills, I couldn't help checking out all the seniors around my table, especially Mrs. Li, who is from the Shandong province known for its dumplings and other flour staples. Coincidentally, my maternal grandfather also came from Shandong province before relocating to Taiwan. Her way of making dumplings reminded me so much of my own wai gong. To all of our surprise, in merely twenty minutes we had

finished making more than enough dumplings for the thirty-plus people there. It was a complete contrast to the experience of many of us that dumpling making is a long and arduous process, because usually it's only our mom or grandma heading the whole project. As we contemplated our achievement in awe, one of the seniors said, "this is what we call 團結力量大" (Tuánjié lìliàng dà, unity is strength), and others followed up with further reflections on how it resembled the 105 Keefer campaign where we used unity and collective power to push for justice.

It was an appropriate metaphor for our political work, and a reminder of the strength of community and organizing, stemming from a conduit of bonding and trust building between generations that might otherwise have been divided by class, Westernization, and migration. Working and being together intergenerationally was an essential aspect of our place-based resistance. Above all, it taught us how to extend our familial cultural strength to the work of justice and made us reflect on what it truly means to take care of our elders, while being able to challenge each other and grow with each other. When I first started facilitating meetings and gatherings, I had a hard time intervening when elders took up more than the allotted time to speak. I was taught never to interrupt and always to obey and agree. We had to learn together how to undo the internalized hierarchy instilled in the name of the unquestioned virtue of filial piety.

As we learned to establish our intergenerational solidarity and negotiate our cultural norms, we were also finding ways to loosen the colonial hold. A big part of this was to decenter the dominance of English in our organizing. The members of our group spoke mainly three languages—Cantonese, Mandarin and English. Some could understand all three, some only spoke one or two, all at varying levels of proficiency. All our meetings and gatherings were conducted alternating Cantonese and Mandarin, with whisper interpretation for people who needed it. This helped our members feel comfortable speaking up without worrying about challenges in communicating in English. We brought the same commitment to meetings with the City, where, as mentioned earlier, language accessibility was a big part of our struggle. The lack of accommodation for non-English speakers was a telltale sign of the racist foundation that Vancouver is built on. However, our members did not waver; our seniors took up every space possible and spoke in Cantonese and Mandarin, condemning the City for its lack of accountability and for allowing gentrification and displacement to wreak havoc on people's lives.

As they experienced being able to communicate in their own languages and participate in city processes and collective actions, members of our organizing group felt more and more emboldened to share their own lived experiences and place-based knowledge. At the same time, we were also able to have meaningful discussions about how to ensure our fight to remain in Chinatown would not be exclusionary but connected to the larger decolonialization effort. We needed to first interrogate and unlearn what the colonial state had taught us and undo the prevailing racial stereotypes about Indigenous people, other marginalized people, and ourselves and the land we are on. We began to read a territorial acknowledgement out loud in unison together at the beginning of all our meetings and gatherings. We translated the land acknowledgement from English into Mandarin and Cantonese. The translation posed some difficulties: “acknowledgement” became “we give our thanks out loud” for being on Coast Salish lands belonging to the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh nations, and “unceded territories” became “lands that have been taken without agreement.”[8] We started doing this practice not just as a necessary protocol, but also because it helped establish a foundation and approach for our meetings and all our collective decisions while creating room for questions and discussions.

When we started this practice, we did not hear any of the seniors comment on it, but everyone agreed to keep doing it. Eventually, in one of our regular weekly meetings, after we read the territorial acknowledgement together one of the seniors raised her hand and asked, “What do we mean when we say Chinatown is on land that was taken without agreement from Indigenous people?” She went on to ask, “Does this mean that Chinatown is not Chinese people’s, but we are on someone’s land that was stolen from them?” There followed a discussion on the history of the traditional land Chinatown is on and how Chinatown was formed before proceeding with our meeting. One of the agenda items that day was to give a response to the City about some temporary modular housing being built on the edge of Chinatown. Different members were giving their thoughts, and then the same senior spoke up: “As per our discussion earlier, we should ask the Indigenous people what they think about this since this is their land. Who are we

[8] The Chinese translation of the territorial acknowledgement used in our meetings and gatherings: 我們鳴謝我們是在 瑪斯昆 (Musqueam)、史戈米殊 (Squamish)和塔斯里爾-沃特斯 (Tsleil-Waututh)這些西岸原住民族從來沒有同意交出的領土上

to make this decision? And if this project is going to prioritize housing for Indigenous people, then it is our responsibility to support it."

That was a particularly impactful moment for me as a young organizer, to witness the reorientation of a Chinese elder's relationship with Chinatown—someone who holds a strong sense of place in Chinatown, a place which she depends on—and to see space open up for solidarity and Indigenous leadership. Although in many contexts territorial acknowledgement has been co-opted to be tokenistic and performative, when it is practiced respectfully and intentionally it has profound pedagogical and transformative potential. This kind of "reflective territorial acknowledgement," as Malissa Phung points out, is an important "first step towards building Indigenous and Asian relations, particularly in situations of racial conflict and colonial misapprehensions" (Phung, 2019, p. 20). This practice enabled us to situate the ongoing threats to Chinatown's identity as part of a settler colonial capitalist process that continues to displace and erase Indigenous presence. It also helped us to recognize and act on our indebtedness to the original stewards of the land we are now living on.

Knowing that the practice of acknowledgment is, as Phung states, only a necessary first step, we sought more ways to bridge the two communities. Since it is difficult, due to language barriers and racial trauma, for many Chinatown elders to participate in Indigenous and other social movements or cultivate personal relationships with people they might see in their daily lives, we started organizing social gatherings where people could come together through interpretation to share traditional foods and stories, building personal relationships in a safe space. We also organized the seniors to attend many important Indigenous-led actions such as the Annual Women's Memorial March that brings attention to missing and murdered Indigenous women along with all women and gender diverse people in the Downtown Eastside.[9] In this way we let them know that they could be a part of a community of change outside of our own organizing.

[9] The Annual Women's Memorial March on Valentine's Day was started in 1992 after the murder of a woman on Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. Since then, every year organized by women and gender-diverse people the community comes together to collective express grief, remeberance, and anger and to bring light to the ongoing violence against Indigneous women, girls, two-spirits, and transwomen. See more about the march: https://womensmemorialmarch.wordpress.com/about/

Additionally, since a lot of learning opportunities like workshops and reading groups tend to be inaccessible to the seniors, the youth organizers gathered materials and set up various workshops with the elders to discuss topics like capitalism and the housing crisis, dehumanization and discrimination, and colonialism in Canada. We always had fruitful and often heated discussions. Holding these workshops continues to remind me and other organizers that our elders hold embodied knowledge and lived experiences of being in oppressive systems. They have all felt them, experienced them, and resisted them. They might not have the same political language to describe the systems themselves, but it does not mean they cannot take part in this type of political discussion. They just need a place to name, to reflect, to dialogue with each other, to grow, and to see the possibility for change.

Grace Lee Boggs (1998) emphasizes the importance of reflection in the process of resistance. She cautions against thinking of racialized people only as an “oppressed mass”; rather, they need to be seen as people capable of making collective “moral choices” (p.149) and accountable to develop “self-consciousness and a sense of political and social responsibilities” (p.152). This expresses what we have experienced in our organizing in Chinatown. Although our work still has a long way to go and it is often messy and slow, we constantly witness our collective growth. When many would see low-income Chinese seniors as merely a helpless population steeped in conservative mindsets, we witness the senior members exercising their own agency and becoming change makers of their own life situations, as well as better allies to the First People of the land they now depend on.

In closing, Chinatown itself reminds us of the way racism is manifested in the system of colonialism and capitalism, but it also reminds us of its failure. It teaches us to confront the system through everyday place-based praxis. With the recent rise in anti-Asian rhetoric and violence, it is especially important to draw the connection between colonialism and racism. This surge in violence is not just a momentary condition but is situated in the history of the racial foundations of settler colonial capitalism. If we fail to recognize how our struggle is connected to these broader structures and forces in Canadian and global society, our anti-racism effort can be easily co-opted and manipulated. The face of gentrification today in Chinatown is no longer only the white corporate developers, but also the Chinatown capitalist elites. They have been using the wave of stop anti-Asian hate to advocate for “cleaning up” Chinatown by increasing the

police presence, implicitly criminalizing the unhoused people in Chinatown and the neighbouring Downtown Eastside. This is a sinister part of the new form of gentrification in Chinatown, using the seemingly progressive messaging of anti-racism and “cultural revitalization” to mobilize an exclusionary story of place which organizer Vince Tao appropriately names “gentrification with Chinese characteristics” (Lowe, 2019). Without understanding the intricate ways in which Asian racialization can be manipulated and commodified to advance colonial capitalist gain, it is very easy to buy into a rhetoric such as “cultural revitalization.”

In May 2023, six years after our 105 Keefer St. victory, Beedie Living obtained a decision from the BC Supreme Court requiring the city to re-hear their development application. In three weeks, the community—the Chinatown community, the DTES, allies and organizers—came together and mobilized hundreds of residents. For seven days, Chinese seniors with youth went door to door to invite and inform low-income tenants to the action. Together, we held our own Community Council right at the site of 105 Keefer St. Together, we voted no to the development plan and yes to 100% social housing. Together we showed the city that they cannot erase us. As we have been doing since the creation of Chinatown, we continue to make this place safe for each other.

Through this struggle, we have learned to rely on community building and collective caring, as well as deepening our understanding and relationship with Indigenous people and the land we are on. In a meeting, our canvassers shared that they felt the passion and support of the people they encountered, and told stories of the hospitality they received—one grandma offering fruits to the doorknockers. It was clear to them that residents feel the responsibility to protect Chinatown for low-income people. By rooting our struggle in place, we have learned to radically re-orient the positionality of immigrants to expose manufactured belonging and dependency on settler colonial logic that aims to perpetuate colonial control and capitalist exploitation. Although we are not going to win every battle, we know that we are bringing about grassroots change that will continue to press for justice and belonging for all.

Chapter 5. Towards a Radical Pedagogy of Place

As I write these words, I am going through another round of visa extension, a perennial process throughout my life. This round has taken three months so far. With the last visa expiring, I am now in what is called “maintained status” and have to stay in Canada because if I leave, I risk not being able to come back at all. I am going to miss my brother’s wedding in Taiwan, and I am not able to go see my nainai who has just turned 88 and has been having a series of health issues. Meanwhile, Beedie Living has returned to sink its claws deeper into 105 Keefer, this time with the backing of the BC Supreme Court and against a backdrop of increased homelessness and displacement in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside. My own university has just threatened to withhold healthcare benefits because of three days of strike action organized by overworked teaching support staff. This disproportionate escalation will mainly affect international students who make up a mostly racialized and underpaid student workforce, because when the province of BC did away with the healthcare fee for its residents, it simultaneously doubled the fee for international students to subsidize this move.

It has been difficult to write in the midst of this series of attacks and alongside the pressure of my immigration status. I feel like I need to put my body on the line with the rest of my communities, but it is also in response to these relentless attacks that I write. It is in experiencing the struggle, the pain, that I write. It is in relationship with the community and place that I write. I write to claim a space to “talk back” (hooks, 1989), to raise up our collective voice, and to put on the record that the margin is not to be overlooked. I also write to live up to my responsibility and “[keep] alive a commitment to be in better relationship with one another, to not merely absorb and repeat colonial violence unthinkingly, but to enact kinship we are capable of” (Wong, 2018). I write to know myself better, to name my truth, so I can be better kin. I write because it’s my responsibility.

Writing this dissertation is not simply about reporting a research result. The writing itself has been an essential part of this re-searching journey, an important part of the methods of returning and storying. Going into this writing journey, I didn’t know what would transpire. I approached it with both anticipation and fear. At times it was difficult to

give into this process fully. I found myself fighting a constant battle to blur the lines of what is appropriately academic. At the same time, I had to grapple with the limitation of writing in a linear language while thinking and living in multiple languages, discourses and registers and dealing with the occasional shame and trauma that is attached to my own English-language abilities. On the other hand, I had to let go of some of the writing conventions that I found comforting in order to allow lived theories to come into place. I had to be vulnerable, I had to be open, and I had to allow connections to happen, even in unexpected contexts. And at times, I had to allow the stories "to call up and to stir up" parts of myself I had been ignoring (hooks, 2009, p. 69).

At the core of this re-searching journey, I have been asking what kind of accountability and what responsibilities people who are positioned as Asian immigrants have to the land on which they find themselves. I have also been asking how place itself may be calling on us to resist and to reimagine a world beyond the current colonial and capitalist reality. However, before asking these questions on behalf of a larger community, I had to find my own way into them first. My guides on that journey have included the teachings of feminists of colour, scholarly work on decolonization, and my own lived experiences as educator, researcher, organizer, and immigrant, as well as the ongoing work of situating myself in and relating radically with place.

When I was teaching English in Mexico, over and over again I saw various curricula that were clearly not just about learning a new language, but were designed to place Western ideals and culture above the students' own. I was desperate to find a better way to solve this curricular problem. But what I have come to realize is that this is not simply about shuffling or changing different curricular elements, it is about the structural and systemic underpinnings that guide how curricula are being designed and implemented. What we need is a different kind of education.

In my search for educational alternatives, I became interested in what education can look like and invoke if it begins from what a place is offering us. Being a part of the Environmental School Project gave me an entry point into witnessing the kind of unlearning and relearning needed when attempting to centre place in our pedagogy. Reflecting on my observations and experiences suggested to me how place can push us to ask difficult questions, not just about the education system, but about how we relate to ourselves, each other, and the land as a whole.

As I began to ask about my own relationship to the place I am now in and to the places that I have been, I was also learning about the work done by Black feminists and feminists of colour. They gave me the courage to anchor my inquiry in my own life and to name and connect my own lived experiences to larger political and social issues. From the exploration of their own personal lives, these scholars and activists traced out a feminist path that is premised on the inseparability of the different axes of oppression, that understands our freedom to be contingent on each other's freedom. Embarking on this path, I also began to see the inalienable connections between questions of migration, race, settler colonialism, capitalist exploitation, and land. This was reinforced by my involvement in organizing in Chinatown with low-income immigrant tenants who are fighting to not lose their homes and community to a process of callous gentrification mobilized through classist, racist, and orientalist narratives.

With all of these experiences and teachings adding new understandings and raising new questions, I arrived at the central question of responsibility to place, land, and decolonization. In essence, this entails our ability to respond, to cultivate, and to create decolonial relationships, communities, and alternatives. How to accomplish this is obviously a very big and complex question, but one that is necessary to ask. Rather than expecting it to yield "the answer," we need to focus on the emergent process of answering it—what arises when we take up this question seriously, letting ourselves be guided by it in our work as organizers, educators, and as agents of change?

The chapters in this dissertation are a record of what arose for me in the journey of taking up this question through a place-based feminist commitment. This commitment compelled me to confront the discomfort of giving space to my own lived experience and visiting areas of my life that I did not plan to. I didn't know that taking up this work seriously would mean grappling with my own unarticulated understandings of various places in my life's journey. This experience of *returning*—physically and through remembering—was surprising to me. When I began the writing process, I intentionally blocked out my experiences of moving to and living in the Caribbean. At that time, I felt these experiences were out of context from what I was trying to address. After all, my intention was to explore the specificity of how settler colonialism shapes immigrant settlers' subjectivity, both in Canada and Taiwan. By and large, I do not categorize Belize as a settler colonial nation but a post-colonial one that comes with its own set of considerations. But very quickly it became clear to me that I could not address the rest of

the story without properly situating where I was coming from and where I had been, and it is by exploring this part of my life that I gained a deeper understanding of the intimate connection between (im)mobility, migration, and Western imperialism.

I also did not know I would be called to go back to Taiwan. This physical returning to Taiwan engendered a process of seriously learning what it means to connect with the (is)land; it brought out the importance of recognizing my own ancestry as a Han Chinese person, and of reckoning with our positionality as settlers in Taiwan. Through this perspective, I gained clearer insight into Taiwan's settler coloniality as it is mediated through global capitalist and imperialist modalities. I also began to see the parallel modes of control and narratives of performative progressivism in both settler colonial Canada and settler colonial Taiwan—the invocation of concepts such as "multiculturalism" without a recognition of the colonial reality, or the furthering of the historical land grab through "revitalization" of marginalized neighborhoods or post-disaster Indigenous villages.

What has anchored me in this complex exploration have been practices of connecting with place, of building relationships with people and land, of digging into memories that provide glimpses of the "underbelly" of colonial place-making, and of turning to the margins as sources of resistance and radical imagination. The example I most frequently use of the latter in action took place in Gastown, a trendy tourist area with many high-end restaurants, bars, and shops located in Vancouver's downtown core and adjoining the Downtown Eastside. This is one of the only areas where the City still maintains the cobblestone roads and older buildings, as well as a steam clock (built in 1977), in order to invoke a historical nostalgia. In the "official," sanitized history of this place, Gassy Jack Deighton, a liquor smuggler and inn proprietor in the ramshackle settlement of 19th-century Vancouver, is hailed as the founder of Gastown and one of the most prominent figures in the city's early history. What is not commonly known is his treatment of Indigenous women and his marriage to two Squamish women; one of these, a 12-year-old Squamish girl, Quahail-ya, was able to escape from Deighton when she was 15.[10]

[10] Squamish poet and knowledge holder T'uy't'tanat (Cease Wyss) has written a poem dedicated to Quahail-ya, published in the 2018 issue of the Capilano Review. The poem is titled: *Ode to Madeline Deighton*.

At the 31st annual Women's Memorial March, the procession stopped in front of Gassy Jack's statue at the corner of Water and Carrall St. and together they toppled the statue, thus removing a colonial symbol that had dominated the narrative of what Gastown is. For me, Gastown serves as an example of the dangers and traps we can fall into when we do not interrogate dominant place narratives and meanings—an example of how place-making can be a tool of colonial and capitalist domination. However, when we go deeper and engage in the place that is lived and co-created at the grassroots, we find different stories. The toppling of Gassy Jack's statue is the grassroots story making its voice known. It is a refusal of the imposed colonial place construction that hides the soaring number of missing and murdered Indigenous women and the continuing violence against sex workers, drug users, displaced and unhoused people, and other marginalized residents.

Through a radical relationship with place, we may be able to sustain and co-create this refusal and find the strength for survival, the drive to experience hope and day-to-day joy, and the ever-emerging imagination of a futurity that includes the flourishing of the land and of all beings. In other words, when we engage with a place that is deeply rooted in the relationality to the lived, it is a pedagogical program that is able to transform how we relate to ourselves, to each other, to the land we are on, and to challenge the hegemonic imaginary of how lives should be organized. Grace Lee Boggs (2015) so poignantly explains that radical place consciousness:

> encourages us to come together around common, local experiences and organize around our hopes for the future of our communities and cities…[and] it is also unique in the way that it links issues….[providing] opportunities to struggle around race, gender, and class issues inside struggles around place (p. 56).

This is what I mean when I say "radical"—work that is not just about naming and critique, but requires deep collective engagement in "articulating what we do that works to address and resolve issues… [This] is needed to generate anew and inspire a spirit of ongoing resistance" (hooks, 2003, p. xiv). This is how we generate hope, especially in a time when capitalist individualism is pervasive and insidiously persuasive. Angela Davis (2006) emphasizes, "It is in collectivity that we find reservoirs of hope and optimism" (p, 49).

Therefore, in this final chapter, I want to reflect more deeply on what I have learned through what I have been describing as "radical pedagogy of place"[11]. In part, this is a pedagogy aimed at understanding how the system and structure of settler colonial capitalism is upheld through various place-based processes of cooptation, mobilization, and control (examples in this dissertation include the control of movement across borders, land expropriation following natural disasters, and dispossession through gentrification and cultural appropriation). It is a pedagogy that has the potential to help us develop the ability or "facultad," which, as Gloria Anzaldúa (2012) describes, is the "… capacity to see in surface phenomena the meaning of deeper realities to see the deep structure below the surface. It is an instant 'sensing,' a quick perception arrived at without conscious reasoning" (p. 60).

In any given location, within current colonial capitalist structures, there always exists a multiplicity of understandings of place, but these cannot be treated as simply different interpretations of equal perspectives while overlooking the power relations amongst them. Take a forest, for example: it is not simply a site of economic benefit for logging and traditional Indigenous land, as if these two perspectives existed unproblematically side-by-side. Rather, these two place framings are related articulations, in that the traditional Indigenous land has been continuously exploited through logging (and many other ways) for capitalist gain. Understanding the relationship between different place articulations within colonial and capitalist structures moves us away from reductionist solutions; for example, we come to understand that the struggle is not against loggers who are cutting down the trees or environmentalists who are trying to take away the loggers' livelihood, but against the colonial capitalist system that

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[11] I want to acknowledge that education philosopher Claudia Ruitenberg (2005) was the first to use the term "radical pedagogy of place," as a way of distinguishing her take on place-based education from the pedagogical traditions espoused by David Greenwood (2003). Following the deconstructive theorist Derrida, she argues that place-based education must go beyond "the nostalgic desires for stable rootedness" (p.213). For her, a radical pedagogy of place deconstructs "place" and understands that experiences are mediated through an ever-producing and produced trans-locality and community. This pedagogy then is also a "call of hospitality" (p. 218) to those outside of the place. Center to her radical pedagogy of place is the discussion of "multiplicity of and conflicts between interpretations of a place, the traces of meaning carried by the place in the past, the openness to future interpretation and meaning-construction….It encourages not entrenchment in one's locality and community but rather hospitality and openness" (218-219). Ruitenberg subsequently developed this idea further (2014). While her framing of radical place pedagogy has helped me to reflect more deeply on my own experiences and assumptions, it differs from my search for a decolonial feminist perspective that makes sense of place in terms of settler colonial capitalism and the resistance and refusal of it.

depends on exploitation of land and labour and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. Radical pedagogy of place involves finding solidarity and imagining alternatives that include the flourishing of everyone and the affirmation and enactment of Indigenous sovereignty.

Here I do not attempt to propose a comprehensive pedagogical theory of how to realize a radical pedagogy of place; indeed, to the extent that it would have to gloss over the vast differences between places, such a theory might end up being wildly misleading. I do however see potential value in sketching an emergent and generative pedagogical process that is radically responsive to place and has the potential to counter colonial unknowing and embodying. My way into such an account is through a further meditation on some of the learnings that have emerged or have been gifted to me through the work described in this dissertation. First, I reflect on the radical practice of hospitality experienced through my time spent in Rinari and in Chinatown. Understanding and respecting boundaries is integral to this practice, yet it is vital to distinguish boundaries of this kind from the artificial borders set up to exert control and further exploitation. This leads me to reflect further on my own Taiwanese identity and how my understanding and practice of it has changed in the course of my research. Lastly, I illustrate what I have come to understand about radical pedagogy of place by describing how I structured and facilitated a recent post-secondary course in Global Asia studies.

Radical hospitality and the respect for boundaries

Radical pedagogy of place calls for an understanding of the crucial relationship between hospitality, responsibility, and reciprocity. Without this understanding, hospitality and calls for openness can be coopted and abused. Gustavo Esteva and Madhu Prakash (2014), while recognizing that every culture has its own form of expressing hospitality, argue that the Western construction of the individual self, the commodification of everyday life and the continuation of colonialism have long underpinned the violation of the hospitality of Indigenous and marginalized communities. This is evident every day, as “Western travellers receive warm hospitality when visiting the global south but continue to experience that speaking the language of the host is not a condition to be a guest in non-western culture” (p.89). And this is equally the case in

settler colonial states, where settlers continue to exploit, consume and exoticize Indigenous and marginalized communities.

Vancouver provides many examples of these kinds of violations. In the Downtown Eastside, since 2014 there have been tours organized to gaze upon the hardship and poverty experienced by the community. Often costing more than $150, the tours turn people's lived experiences into 'poverty porn' (Ward, 2016) and anthropological consumption. A few kilometres to the west sits the world-famous Stanley Park. The city takes pride in the Park as one of the only urban naturally-preserved areas in North America. However, as urban theorist Matt Hern (2010) describes, Stanley Park is "as much a construction as the concrete and glass buildings downtown" (p.26). The city does not acknowledge the Indigenous population that was displaced to build the park in 1888; however, it likes to flaunt the Brockton Point totem poles, located near the former site of actual Musqueam and Squamish villages (Hern, 2010; Mackie, 2019). The site is one of the most popular in the park, heavily visited by tourists nationally and internationally—but these poles do not belong to the Coast Salish nations whose land the park is on. They were imported from farther up the Northwest Coast, as part of a "model Indigenous village" planned by the Park Board and intended to present Indigenous culture as something "far away," something that could be easily consumed but not invoke questions about the violent removal of the park's original inhabitants. Although this plan was later cancelled and only the totem poles were kept in place, it provides a telling example of how, while Indigenous cultures are commodified and exotified, the people continue to be displaced and invisibilized.

In Taiwan, many Indigenous communities have been forced to turn into tourism villages for predominantly Han settler tourists. In 2018, I visited one of these villages near Rinari. Tourists roamed around with occasional racist comments about the people, place, and their way of life. Many tourists were taking photos without permission, and often would go into the people's private spaces without asking. At the first turn of the main street, a Paiwan elder was quietly weaving baskets. A group of tourists stopped and asked the elder if they can take photos with her in Mandarin. When she did not respond, as Mandarin is not her language, they proceeded to ask her in English, "Can I take your photo?" Then they took the photos anyways without waiting for any response. In that moment, they not only took her image as a possession, but they also made her foreign on her own land.

Without a critical conversation about the ways hospitality can be radically practiced, calling for hospitality and openness runs the danger of burdening marginalized communities with the responsibility and expectation of opening their communities up and always being welcoming. This kind of "positive" framing is often used to absolve settlers of responsibility; it can be a way of placing blame on the marginalized for hindering "reconciliation" efforts or for being "unwilling to forget the past." Therefore, hospitability needs to be understood as including reciprocal responsibilities and trust on the part of both the host and the guest. Montgomery and bergman (2017) conclude that hospitability "connotes a sensibility of trust based on people's sense of their capacity to face the world together…. To be 'hosted' is to be allowed to encounter a world, to be invited into it" (p. 160). This calls for those being hosted to have the ability to respond—to know how to practice responsibility in relationship to the people and place. "When practiced collectively," Simpson (2022) adds, "this builds the most beautiful responsive formation, continually being remade and morphing to meet the needs to individual needs" (p. 135).

There is also a selectiveness in practicing hospitability. Gloria Anzaldúa calls this notion "bridging." While "bridging" is a call to expand and build up community, it also entails the risk of "being open to personal, political, and spiritual intimacy, to risk being wounded" (Anzaldúa & Keating, 2002, p. 3). The key to effective bridging is "knowing when to close ranks to those outside our home, group, community, nation—and when to keep the gates open" (p. 3). It is about "selective openness, with firm boundaries" (Montgomery & bergman, 2017, p. 120), in contrast to the way Indigenous and other marginalized communities have historically been forced to open up to colonial advances—part of the blueprint of colonialism (Maynard & Simpson, 2022, p, 134).

An example of selective openness and the practice of radical hospitality is Kucapungane, as presented in Chapter 3. I also witnessed and learned more of the potential of this practice as a form of resistance from my visit as a tourist to the Orchid Island, Taiwan, the traditional home of the Tao People. In the late 1970s, the Tao community was forced into an agreement to open a nuclear waste facility on the island. A Tao activist on the island told me that the government at the time exploited the kindness and hospitality of the elder and their chief and took advantage of the fact that they did not understand Mandarin very well, persuading them to sign a deal for what many thought was going to be a fish cannery that would bring jobs for the younger

generations (personal communication, 2018). Since then, Orchid Island has been on the forefront of fighting against nuclear waste and building up their communities to be selective in the way in which they welcome visitors. Everywhere on the island are signs that instruct visitors to be respectful of the beach, especially during their sacred flying fish season, as well as strict rules on going into the villages. We were all treated with hospitality and a chance to learn about the beautiful island and its vibrant natural world, culture, and history, but as visitors we had the responsibility to leave the island as we found it and respect the boundaries that had been set up. The island is not there for tourists to consume but to learn, to care for and to respect.

Of course, I am not presenting these stories as perfect examples of radical hospitality. Both Kucapungane and Tao people still need to survive in a colonial capitalist economy, and their programs and activities represent a compromise between their Indigenous traditions and values and that harsh reality. However, their stories and practices show that it is possible to establish boundaries and assert agency in resistance to colonial capitalist erosion, and thus provide invaluable insights into the possibilities of radical pedagogy of place.

Hospitality, in this radical sense, is not a given. There may be stories, knowledge, and spaces that we as visitors are not welcome to enter, to know or to have. Understanding and respecting boundaries, thus, is also an important part of place-based practice. Indigenous traditions make It clear that this is true not only for humans—in the land and water we can find many models of such an understanding of hospitality, as boundaries in the natural world often provide porous spaces of possibilities and exchanges. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017) describes this place-based relationality as “international relations” based on “consent, reciprocity, respect, and empathy.” She tells us that these have always been a complex set of practices enabling the Nishnaabeg to relate and interact fruitfully with other Indigenous nations, as well the plant nations, animal nations, insects, waters, and spiritual realms (p.61). This Indigenous sense of internationalism, “created and maintained with all the living beings” (p.58), can help us understand how to conduct ourselves on overlapping territories, and how to practice boundary maintenance in order to ensure mutual flourishing and respect.

The ongoing work of learning to belong

When I was working with a group of teachers to design a place-based curriculum located in Sanxia, Taiwan, one of the goals the teachers had was to bring more local knowledge to students so they could experience deeper emotional connections with the place where they live. However, when they started to explore the various places that they wanted to include in the curriculum, they found that it was impossible to restrict the area to what is known as Sanxia now, because the river runs over the border of Sanxia, the older local industry depends on the forest outside of Sanxia, and they also found that Sanxia as a municipality has changed its areas throughout recent history. For me this perplexity reveals that place in itself inherently challenges the official demarcations that have been given power to divide, displace, separate, and hierarchize people and place.

Throughout the dissertation, it has become clear that place critically raises questions about borders and their function, and how lives are unequally organized around them. Our relationship to place and our senses of place are also impacted and embodied by our relationship to borders. My own experiences with borders and border crossing, both in the sense of the physical and sociopolitical, have offered me a way to navigate the world and to examine how the power of the institution of borders has dictated my choices of movement and relationship to my identity and the land I am in. In fact, my experiences of encountering borders started before I had physically crossed one, as indicated in my story in Chapter 2. The work here then is to reject the imposed identity under border imperialism but embrace lived experiences, lived knowledge, and our own senses of ourselves. For feminists of colour and Black feminists, identity, personal experiences, and relationship to one's place is precisely the point of departure for countering the stories about who and where we are that have been imposed by capitalism and colonialism. In fact, this conforms to the original use of identity politics by the anti-capitalist Black feminist group the Combahee River Collective (Taylor, 2017).

Therefore, as mentioned in Chapters 2 and 4, there is a danger in equating one's lived experiences as an immigrant with a fixed immigrant identity. 'Immigrant' is a manufactured relationship and form of belonging predicated on unbelonging; its function is to cultivate allegiance to the state and its colonial-capitalist ideology. As Chatterjee (2018) asserts, "notions of sovereignty, spatial belonging, and national borders primarily enact the conditions for exploitation of immigrants and thus impale them onto the settler

project by shaping their civil rights claims" (p.3). At the beginning of taking up this journey, therefore, I had rejected the idea of belonging as a useful category to talk about responsibility—one still has responsibility to the place they are in, whether one feels they belong or not. One should still cultivate meaningful, resourceful, and caring relations even when one does not "belong." But then I realized the kind of belonging I had been rejecting was the manufactured and performative belonging upheld by border imperialist ideology and capitalist multicultural colonialism. I reject this weaponized sense of belonging that rests on the pressure to conform, to assimilate, to please, and to buy in, so that we can belong. In its place, I embrace belonging that is based on real relation-making, reciprocity, and responsibility. This belonging is hopeful, lively, relational, and "geared toward liberated presents and futures" (Maynard & Simpson, 2022, p. 173). It entails the ability to respond to and account for the place and land we are in and the community that we are building together, so that collectively we can survive and thrive beyond the present (dis)order we all live in.

Throughout this journey, one of the tensions for me was an uncomfortable relationship to my Taiwanese identity. Partially, as I mentioned, this stemmed from the pressure to assimilate and not be different; however, once I began to reclaim the power of self-recognition of my Taiwanese identity, I felt like I couldn't find a space for it or I couldn't settle into it. In Chinatown, my Taiwanese identity was often questioned because of the current geopolitical relationship between China and Taiwan. In fact, the distinction between being Taiwanese and Chinese is at the forefront of political and social discussions for many people of my generation. In some ways, the rise of Taiwanese consciousness is a way of pushing back on Chinese authoritarianism and its "one country" push (Chang, 2019). I have always felt the effects of unspoken rules and strange animosity between people from Taiwan and China, including a hesitancy to talk about our common Chinese ancestry. For example, in Belize the Taiwanese community and the Chinese community do not mingle outside of commercial interactions. On the other hand, I have also experienced deep friendship and mutual care from many Chinese friends I have made over the years in Belize, Mexico and Canada. This is something I may not have experienced if I was still living in Taiwan.

I never really questioned this relationship between Taiwanese and Chinese people until I joined the effort in Chinatown. Eventually I noticed that whenever I was asked where my family is from, I would always say not only "I am from Taiwan" but also

that my wai gong (maternal grandfather) is from Shandong province and my yie yie (paternal grandfather) is from Hunan. Somehow I would always invoke this ancestry for a sense of belonging.

Once, before one of our weekly meetings, one of the seniors walked up to me and asked, “So how is your new president doing?” with a bit of hostility. I was caught off guard and realized that the presidential election had just happened in Taiwan and Tsai Ing Wen, Taiwan’s first female president and a pro-Taiwan-Independence candidate, has just been elected. I stayed silent for a little bit and then responded jokingly, “The president and I aren’t really good friends, but it seems like she’s going to be very busy for a while. But we are not here to talk about her. We are here to talk about how all of us are affected by racism, Vancouver’s housing crisis and gentrification in Chinatown.” Interactions like this have really pushed me to think deeper into what it means to be Taiwanese with Chinese ancestry and what does this Taiwanese identity mean for me.

Musqueam organizer and activist Audrey Siegl once said it is important to know where you come from and make that known when you come to someone else’s land. Every time I participate in indigenous-led events or reading from Indigenous writers, they always talk about the importance of knowing our ancestors and drawing from their strength and teachings. Yet for me, the question of ancestry has always been complicated. As “Taiwanese”, we don’t talk about our “Chinese” background. Yet Chinese stores in Belize have sometimes been my safe heaven when I faced harassment on the street. During major festivals, we would congratulate each other as we share the same cultural roots. Nationalistic differences can’t deny the fact that we share common ground.

Doing work in Vancouver’s Chinatown has pushed me to think about this common ground, this question of ancestry. It feels as if I need to figure this out in order to make solidarity happen. Within our community of East Asian migrant identity, we have shared experiences of oppression but of course there are different levels of privilege. What are the pressures that lead to us also being connected back to the “homeland” and being compared with people who live there? Our lived experiences as immigrants are not being talked about. Everyone has different connections to where they come from. For some, they might not have any connection at all, but many times they are being judged by that.

The picture is further complicated for me by Taiwan's own colonialism. I did not recognize my family's and my position in Taiwan as settlers and Taiwan as a settler colonial nation until I started learning about Indigenous struggles and our responsibilities to decolonization in so-called Canada. Yet that has not decreased my new-found sense of belonging. On the contrary, my experiences in both Chinatown and Kucapungane have given me a new sense of Taiwaneseness—one not based on nationalistic identity but coming both from a connection to my ancestry and from participation in the struggle to accept the truth of our deep complicity in colonialism. Second, it is also a sense of Taiwaneseness that is situated and rooted in the generosity of the land and in the transnational waters of the Pacific Ocean and the Caribbean Sea.

Together, these forms of connection make up a Taiwaneseness that is active, dynamic, and in constant negotiation with place and community. It is facilitated by a decolonial sense of belonging that no longer depends on settler colonial capitalist relation-making through the border apparatus. Our lived place-based experiences constantly confront such division and demarcation. It is a rejection of the identity imposed from above and an embracing of a sense of self based on collective place-based practices and relationships. As a newcomer/(im)migrant, I reject being a settler-in-training, striving instead to become an "unsettler," as Rita Wong (2015) calls it, who comes to articulate identity, belonging, and subjectivity through decolonial responsibility, relationship, and reciprocity.

Teaching for decolonial transformation in and with place

For me, decolonization requires, first and foremost, a dismantling of the colonial apparatus and structures in place. It cannot be lip service or a performative act. Indigenous self-determination and land back are at the center of this political project; it also involves moving away from the capitalist way of organizing our social and material worlds, including decommodifying land and other vital needs like housing, health, and education, eliminating the exploitation of labour, and undoing hierarchical divisions between people that are imposed through artificial boundaries like race, borders, etc. I also view decolonization as an accountability process, requiring conscious grappling with our varied positionalities, identities, and subjectivities.

Most crucially, decolonization is a framework and a process that is emergent and generative, demanding that we be imaginative and committed to an ever-evolving praxis capable of creating a world that is based on the wellbeing of all. There is an intimately personal component in the collective work of undoing colonialism—to be willing to be open, to experience, to ponder, to change, and to allow decolonizing transformation. This is not just about interrogating the personal, as if we knew what it would look and feel like to be a decolonized subject. Rather, it's about recognizing how the personal is being affected as we do the political work of altering our relationship to ourselves, to each other, and to the land. And I believe this commitment and transformation depends on our ability to be responsive to place. To put it another way, the work of decolonization requires us to realign ourselves with the intimate ways place knows us, the radical ways place makes us.

I think about my time spent at the "Chicken Company" River a lot. Specifically, how the river held all of us in its ecology. In that place, we coexisted with each other, we showed care for each other, and we all belonged. Likewise, when I spent time in Rinari and experienced being welcomed into a territory not my own, I found myself called into a new sense of humility and responsibility. And alongside Chinese seniors bravely reclaiming Chinatown as a place of safety for all, I found courage for action and for refusal that stemmed from a deep responsiveness to place. These are the radical and relational aspects of place that hold the potential for personal transformation. Every day such place-based stories, practices, and imaginaries teach us that there are cracks in the seemingly overwhelming power of the existing order, that it is possible to practice collective care in the vortex of individualism, and that we can have relationships with land, with homes, and with other people that are not predicated on profit and exploitation.

As an educator, I need to navigate the institutions that have been set up to reproduce and reinforce colonial knowledge production and capitalist ethics and relations. This journey has confirmed my intuition that thinking about education through radical pedagogy of place inevitably challenges the limitations of the institution, defying its borders and expanding spaces for emergent and transformative potentials. This summer I had the opportunity to teach a course in the Global Asia program at Simon Fraser University. The course's timing coincided with the last stage of writing this dissertation, when I found myself longing for a learning space designed to honour a

radical pedagogy of place. I hope by reflecting on the Global Asia course I can offer educators and community organizers an example of how to bring radical pedagogy of place into a learning space. It began with the following questions: How do I centre place, land, and grassroots voices in the institutional space afforded me? How can I recognize the students' own senses of place, relationships, and knowledge while positioning them as agents of change? And what kinds of educational encounters, containers, and relationships shall I try to cultivate over a course that only lasts 13 weeks?

The overt goal of the course was to explore and learn from the efforts, experiences, and histories of community organizing, social and environmental justice activism and solidarity-building centering people of Asian descent in Vancouver. The whole course was organized into four units. The introductory unit laid the theoretical foundation by examining the interconnecting processes of Asian racialization/anti-Asian racism, settler colonialism, and Indigenous dispossession. The goal of this unit was to provide students with the critical and theoretical tools to understand how these historical processes continue to contribute to shaping the city now known as Vancouver, specifically in the areas of housing, labour, (im)migration/border crossing, food security, and health. For each of these sites of struggle, students learned about related social movement organizations, their histories, and their current efforts, directly from community members—either by participating and going into places where organizing happens, or from invited guest speakers.

This process of direct participation started in the second unit, in which we explored anti-deportation work and migrant worker organizing, specifically in the South Asian and Filipinx communities. This enabled us to reveal and unpack Canada as a colonial project that depends not only on the erasure of Indigenous communities but also on immigration policies and temporary migrant workers. The following unit added on to this foundation with more nuanced considerations of gender, sexuality, and land. Specifically, we visited SWAN Vancouver, an organization dedicated to advocating for and organizing migrant sex workers, and participated in preparing safe sex kits for their outreach efforts. And then we visited Kwekwecnewtxw, a traditional Coast Salish Watch House erected on Burnaby Mountain in opposition of the Transmountain pipeline. We also heard from Chinese queer organizers involved in transnational resistance to anti-LGBTQ actions by the Chinese government, including creating space for many Chinese LGBTQ refugees and migrants to find a sense of belonging in this new place where they

now live. Such work illustrates the transnational nature of place-based organizing—rather than bowing to assimilative modes of being an (im)migrant, we can find new ways to express our beingness that are both locally specific and connected to struggles in other places.

Finally, the last unit focused on resistance against dispossession in the Downtown Eastside. This unit started with the history of the removal and the community building efforts of the Japanese Canadian community on Powell Street, and the organizing efforts of unhoused residents and drug users in the Hastings core. It concluded with learning about the formation of Chinatown and its ongoing struggles. We visited the communities through walking tours with organizers and residents from the area. This type of exercise counters the consumeristic nature of "poverty tours" that I mentioned before, offering a way to learn about a place directly through the people who live there, on their own terms.

The assignments included critical reflections on the students' own or their families' migration journeys, their existing relationships to where they are living, and their grappling with what it means to be living on Indigenous land. Throughout the semester they also engaged in two pieces of reflection on a unit of their choosing. For their final work, they took part in creative projects aimed at contributing to existing movements or community building efforts. The students created a variety of resources, ranging from a short documentary exploring Hong-Kong immigrants' political involvement and sense of belonging to various toolkits to educate their own communities about sex work, migrant workers' working conditions, the harm of the model minority myth, and the plight of international students. In the last class of the course, we held an open house where many guest speakers, community members, and SFU faculty and students came to celebrate with the students in honour of their learning and the resources they created.

This was the structure of the course, but I also want to reflect on my pedagogy and on some features of the students' engagement. All of the students but one in the course were of Asian descent. In the class where we reflected on what land acknowledgements meant for each person, I heard questions from students that resembled a lot of my own initial questions. Many second-generation students asked about how to find a sense of belonging that is not simply shaped by the pull of aligning with Canada—the country where most of them grew up and found shelter from the

hardships faced by older generations of their families in their home countries. Students also expressed a sense of guilt when it came to acknowledging they were living on unceded Indigenous land. In response, I asked them to think of belonging to the land they are on rather than to the nation-state, and challenged them to experience this in relation to their places and to the places we would visit together. I emphasized frequently that we were not just learning how to critique or about what justice work other people are doing; rather, the course was an opportunity to turn our feelings of guilt into practices of solidarity and responsibility, fueled by an understanding that our lives are highly implicated in each other's and with the places that we now live in. During the course work and field trips, students also had the chance be in conversations with elders from their own communities who have dedicated their lives to organizing and fighting for liberation. Students expressed that it was impactful for them to hear from these elders and many began to build relationships with these movement elders outside of the class. I had the best job, not just to facilitate this learning but also to witness students bravely sitting in discomfort and the transformation of their relationships with each other and with place.

Thus, an overarching principle of the course, that I shared explicitly and repeatedly with the students, was that we are not just in the university to tokenistically learn about what other people are doing; we are all highly implicated and deeply a part of these movements. This could only happen by breaking the confines of the institution: we needed to go into the communities and places where authentic responsibility and reciprocity were being practiced. It also meant setting up the educational space differently, with an emphasis on learning collectively rather than individually receiving a perfect grade at the end of the term, and cultivating a mutual commitment of trust, mutual aid, and showing up for each other. It is possible to do this within an institution set up to encourage competition and individual achievement and to reinforce capitalist relations, but it takes a collective effort. First, I had the support of the program's director, who in addition to practicing non-hierarchical relationships also used her own institutional power to obtain funding so that community participants could receive stipends for their labour. Second, it was also vital that students bring in their own knowledge of place and transnational and intergenerational memories to contribute to our collective learning. Their own experiences were an important ground to build their analysis on. Lastly, a course of this type was only possible because of the opportunity of

connecting with a community of change that so generously opened up their places and experiences, trusting the students to follow protocol and take up the responsibility for reciprocity. Before meeting a guest speaker or going into a community, we spent a significant amount of time learning about their work and coming to an understanding of how to best respect their time and generosity. This was also facilitated through my own participation in and relationships with some of the communities. As a result, many of the students have become volunteers and are taking on projects that they hope will be useful for the ongoing organizing efforts in these communities, including the most recent round of the 105 Keefer campaign.

Teaching this course and holding space for this collective learning experience feels, in a way, like the culmination of the journey I have been on in this thesis, embodying the commitment I have made to place and to action and to putting what I have learned into practice. Clearly, it is not just my own achievement. It takes a whole community to realize a radical pedagogy of place, just as it also takes educators committed to going into the communities and centering voices of place that have been marginalized. Such a pedagogy is not just about providing tools for analysis and critique; more importantly, it is about facilitating and creating space for encounters that allow all of us, both educators and students, to move through our own implicatedness into action that leads to change. At its core, radical pedagogy of place is an emergent praxis, imaginative, joyful, and deeply self-reflective in its commitment to place and liberation.

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Appendix.

Joint Letter to President Xi by Representatives within the Indigenous Historical Justice and Transitional Justice Committee

Source:
Hong Kong Free Press, https://hongkongfp.com/2019/01/09/sacred-space-open-letter-xi-jinping-indigenous-peoples-taiwan/

We, are the indigenous peoples of Taiwan. We have lived here, in *our* Motherland, for more than six thousand years. We are undoubtedly *not* ethnic minorities within the so-called “Chinese nation.” The stories passed down to us by our ancestors — those who have also lived among our mountains, forests, grasslands, valleys, rivers, oceanic waters, and adjacent islands — reveal that Taiwan is the traditional territory of this land’s indigenous peoples. This is a land where generations of us have given our lives protecting. Our ancestors’ Spirits are still living here. This is sacred space. Taiwan does not belong to China.

We, the indigenous peoples of Taiwan, have for centuries been enduring the deeds, and sometimes the empty words, of those who have pushed up onto our island’s shores. This has resulted in us being forcibly repressed by colonialists and also ruled by authoritarian regimes. The Spanish, the Dutch, the Zheng Kingdom, the Qing Kingdom, the Japanese, and the Republic of China: they have all come here; all have left their marks. We were even called “barbarians” and “untamed savages!” Now, we are officially recognized as Taiwan’s original occupants. Yes; we have fought against imperialism and every foreign intruder. We have also signed various contracts with the Dutch, and agreements with the Americans and others.

We, the indigenous peoples of Taiwan, have helped propel this nation towards being an international beacon of and for human rights, democracy, and freedom. After thousands of years, we are still here. We have never given up our rightful claim to Taiwan’s sovereignty.

Mr. Xi Jinping: you do not understand dignity, so you misunderstand greatness.

It is true that we as Taiwan's indigenous peoples harbor some dissatisfactions with the modern Taiwanese political State system that has been built upon our Motherland. This State has fairly recently began paying attention to matters of historical and transitional justice regarding Taiwan's indigenous peoples. This State has begun to recognize our ethnic and cultural diversity, and also about different historical understandings. Nevertheless, Taiwan is a nation that we are all still striving to build together, along with other people who recognize this land for what it actually is.

This is a nation within which different groups of people are trying to understand each other's painful historical experiences. This is a nation within which we can tell our own stories and in our own languages. We have freedom and can decide the kind of country we aspire to further have. We work hard to improve this. This, is dignity. Whether it is the indigenous Kanakanavu group comprised of three hundred people, or the indigenous Amis with two hundred thousand, each of us has equal human rights to self-determination. This, is dignity.

Our view is that the mono-culturalism, inter-country unification, and hegemony being promoted, even threatened, by Mr. Xi on behalf of the China government is not greatness and nothing to be desired. Being humble to this land, to respect others' lives, to co-exist with other people groups that are united in pursuit of the common good: this is what we believe in.

Mr. Xi Jinping: people should not harm other people, no matter how different they are.

As the representative of China's government, Mr. Xi in his recent speech insisted on Taiwan unifying with China, while implementing a "One Country Two Systems" international policy. Mr. Xi said this would be backed by China's military force, and they will not harm other Chinese. However, violence of any kind is wrong. Nobody, whether Chinese or other, should ever be harmed.

We have witnessed how the Tibetan and the Uyghur have become driven into cultural, linguistic, and religious ethnocide, after they were essentially forced to become "Chinese." We have witnessed how Hong Kong's people, under this "One Country Two Systems" framework, have experienced the rapid eroding and loss of their democracy

and freedoms. We have witnessed how even mainland China's people cannot express themselves freely or defend their fundamental human rights.

Mr. Xi: Violence does not ever lead to peace. There is an old indigenous Sakizaya saying: misawacu hanizaay masasu takid. This means, "Those who bully others will have the same brought back to them." Stop intimidating Taiwan's peoples with threats of force. Also, strive to bring human rights and freedom to China's people.

Mr. Xi Jinping: Taiwan's indigenous peoples and the sovereignty of Taiwan will not be threatened, and we will not recede.

The future of Taiwan as a State will be based on the self-determination of all its ethnic groups; this is including the indigenous peoples of Taiwan.

A country's indigenous peoples' must consent to collective self-determination before any government, political party, or group may negotiate with a foreign force or State and merge the country's indigenous peoples' traditional territory with territory under (de facto) control of another State.

We, Taiwan's indigenous peoples, are determined to remain steadfast in guarding and preserving our Motherland. We have persevered for thousands of years, and we will continue doing this.

If someday China abandons its distorted understanding of history, nationality, and modern-day Statehood — if China becomes our friendly neighbor, not our "parents" by force — only then will we raise our glass to China, our neighbor; it will be filled with millet wine and all our sincerity. *pasola xmnx na mansonsou!* ("May every time you breathe, you breathe smoothly." — *Tsou*)

Signatories:

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