

Decolonial Journey

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Decolonial Journey 1 – Decolonize myself

July 11, 2025

I call this a decolonial journey because I view the past differently in light of all I've been learning over the years about how insidious colonialism is in White society. I believe this will help me continue this journey to decolonize myself.

White

I need to confront the concept of 'Whiteness' from the beginning of this journey. From the time white settlers first arrived in this land, they brought with them their culture of supremacy and dominance over the original people. Supported by the Doctrine of Discovery, in which the Church blessed the theft of Indigenous lands. Colonialism is embedded in White society in this country. **White people, including myself, must start their decolonial journey here.** You cannot work for decolonization until you deal with your Whiteness.

I think my decolonial journey began when this Quaker kid, inspired by several Quaker men and their families in my community, refused to participate in the conscription of men for the armed forces. They knew the risks, and many were imprisoned for taking such a step. Other Quakers were led to leave this country because of its increasing militarism, and developed the Monteverde community in Costa Rica.

What could be more 'colonial' than participating in the military might of this country against other countries and peoples?

My Quaker friend and mentor, Don Laughlin, was imprisoned for his refusal to participate in military conscription. My mother witnessed his arrest. She was a student at Scattergood Friends School, and Don was on the staff there. The community came together to support his wife, Lois, who also worked at Scattergood at that time, and their newborn son.

This taught me about community support for those who take such risks.

It also taught me the importance of seeking spiritual guidance and then following that leading, regardless of the possible consequences.

I was at Scattergood when I turned eighteen years of age, November 1969, when I was required to register for the draft (Selective Service System). The Vietnam War was raging at the time. I was clearly led to resist the draft. But I learned that the most difficult piece of this was dealing with my family's great distress at my intention. I never convinced them that I would be morally wounded for life if I betrayed what I was being led to do. It became clear my parents were never going to be comfortable with my decision, so I turned in my draft cards without their support. They did support the idea of my registering as a conscientious objector, which was a

'safe' alternative. But it was clearly a way to co-opt people opposed to war while deflecting criticism of the Selective Service System itself.

A Supreme Court decision meant I wasn't arrested for my draft resistance. My Scattergood School classmate, Daniel Barrett, was imprisoned for his resistance during this time.

Don Laughlin collected stories of ["Young Quaker Men Face War and Conscription,"](#) which includes Don's, Daniel's, and my stories.

I've shared these experiences to illustrate how they laid the foundation for the way I would seek spiritual guidance throughout my life. They also revealed a sobering truth: most people I know have tended to choose the more comfortable path when faced with such moral challenges.

[Cars as Weapons of Mass Destruction](#)

My next spiritual adventure occurred when this rural Quaker boy moved to Indianapolis in 1971. I was stunned by how filthy the air quality was. This was before the introduction of catalytic converters, which happened around 1975. I sometimes developed headaches, coughing, and/or nausea when riding my bicycle. I didn't have a car.

This triggered the spiritual vision of my beloved Rocky Mountains hidden behind clouds of smog. Being a 'developing' photographer, I loved to try to capture the beauty of the Rockies. This was prior to digital cameras, of course. So I was only able to take a few photos at a time. The usual number of exposures per roll of film was 12 or 36. On my last trip to Rocky Mountain National Park, I took 1,194 photos over four days. I didn't know if I would ever return. (Link to those photos from 2017, [Colorado 2017 Export v1](#))

This is one of my Colorado photos. I developed the film and printed the photo in a makeshift darkroom I would set up in the bathroom.



(C) Jeff Kisling. Long's Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park, Colorado

My spiritual vision was related to this photo, and my fear this would be hidden by clouds of smog if something wasn't done. I didn't think it would get that bad, but we didn't know what would happen if the auto exhaust continued, unchecked, with the increasing number of cars on the roads.

I couldn't stand to think of that possibility and knew I couldn't contribute to it, which led to my decision to live my life without a car. That profoundly affected the rest of my life, in many excellent ways.

My story of [Cars as Weapons of Mass Destruction](#) was included in the book 'Explore Sustainable Indiana' by my environmental activist friends.

Why do I include this in a discussion of colonialism? Because of the horrible devastation inflicted on Mother Earth by the white settler colonists, who see all resources as sources of wealth. To be extracted with no regard to the consequences. The epitome of colonialism.

Decolonial Journey 2 Rejecting cars

July 12, 2025

Numbering these journeys is arbitrary, not necessarily counted in terms of time or subject matter. I wondered what Journey 2 would be about. This is what came to me:

I became deeply involved in my research career at Riley Children's Hospital of Indiana University Medical Center. Our research was about infant lung development and disease. There were only a few such labs worldwide, mainly because the equipment needed for the research was not commercially available. Part of my work was biomedical engineering, building the physical parts of the systems we designed. Then the greatest obstacle was developing the software required to run the testing. Switch valves on and off, read and display multiple signals in real-time, then immediately display the waveforms and other graphics and numeric results, so we could determine if we had acceptable data. And manage the complex databases. I loved programming because you could immediately see your program in action (on test lungs). But it was really intense.

Ironically, I did my first medical programming with the aforementioned Don Laughlin during the summer prior to my Senior year at Scattergood, 1969.

My primary decolonial witness during this time was refusing to have an automobile, figuring out how to live in an unwalkable city with mediocre mass transit systems. I would bicycle, but my preferred mode of transit was running. I loved it so much it often felt like flying. Each year, I looked forward to the Indianapolis 500 Mini Marathon, a 13-mile course that began downtown, went west to the Indianapolis 500 race track, which we actually ran on, and returned downtown. I did that for twenty-three years in a row. One of my saddest days, so far, was when I could no longer run.

This was decolonial, rejecting the mass production of cars and the materials that were required to manufacture them, and their consumption of fossil fuels. Reducing the extractive damage and the pollution of air, land, and water of Mother Earth.

Running on the Indianapolis 500 track as part of the Mini Marathon



Decolonial Journey 3 Resisting extractive practices

July 12, 2025

I last wrote that my leading to live without a car was a decolonial practice. I hadn't thought in those terms prior to looking more deeply into colonialism in this country.

Resisting Extractive Practices

Resisting extractive practices is a core act of decolonizing because it directly confronts colonial systems that were built by settler-colonists who exploited, and continue today to exploit the land, water, and other resources, and Indigenous peoples for the settler's own profit, without the consent of the indigenous people.

My decision to live without a car made me much more attuned to threats to Mother Earth. But I was distraught that I couldn't find other ways to resist.

When I learned about the Keystone Pledge of Resistance, I knew this was something I should join. The Keystone Pledge of Resistance had a site on the Internet where people could sign the pledge to risk arrest via nonviolent civil disobedience if it looked like the approval of the Keystone permit to cross the US-Canadian border was imminent.

One of the pledge organizations was the Rainforest Action Network (RAN), who sent a pair of activists who had experience organizing such resistance. Todd and Gabe came to Des Moines for an intense training event that I was able to attend. Now I had awesome tools to build a Keystone resistance group in Indianapolis. And which were most useful from then on.

Me at one of the Stop the Keystone Pipeline events I organized, based on the Keystone Pledge training. I became acquainted with Derek Glass, who help me create the following video that explains the Keystone Pledge of Resistance in detail. Eventually, President Obama denied the permit. Then President Trump approved it, but by that time, our resistance had been so costly that the pipeline was not built.



Decolonial Journey 4 Pipeline resistance

July 14, 2025

Yesterday, I introduced extractive practices as a colonial concept. Resisting such practices is where my activism has been focused, and where it intersects with the foundational work of Indigenous peoples and their care of Mother Earth..

My path related to extractive practices and colonialism began in the early 1970s, when I was clearly led to live without a car. Meaning I was rejecting extractive practices every day.

Much of what we did locally for the Keystone Pledge of Resistance involved public witness of our opposition to the Keystone pipeline, holding signs as we gathered in public places. But more importantly, we built a community of people who wanted to be in the struggle. We did some training sessions in Indianapolis, based on what we had been taught by the Rainforest Action Network.

(See: <https://quakersmutualaidandabolition.blog/2025/07/12/decolonial-journey-3/>).

I had hoped some Native people would attend some of these public vigils. Because I was aware of how sustainably Native Americans, and all Indigenous peoples that I am aware of, live, and have lived for centuries. But I did not know how to connect with any of them.

Dakota Access Pipeline resistance

This changed dramatically when we held vigils about the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL). Many Native Americans began to show up at our vigils. I never learned how the Native people heard about our demonstrations. The invitation was likely from my friends Joshua Taflinger and Brandi Herron, who led the Dakota Access Pipeline resistance in Indianapolis. Joshua went to Standing Rock several times.

I am inspired to share with you all more directly a post I wrote, because I consider you an established & effective nature/spiritual warrior, and believe that there is a need for the perspectives shared in the attached post to be more common thought in the minds of the many.

If you feel truth from this writing, and are inspired, I highly encourage you to re-write your own version, in your own words/perspectives, and post to your network.

With the intention of helping us all wake up, with awareness, clarity, and direction.

..spreading and weaving reality back into the world....

This is the post Joshua was referring to:

What has risen to the surface at Standing Rock is a physical/spiritual movement. Learn how to quiet your mind. To find the silent receptive space to receive guidance. To learn to adapt and follow the pull of synchronicity to guide you to where you will find your greatest support and strength.

What I have found in my time praying in the indigenous earth based ways, is that it's not about putting your hands together and talking to god.... It's about quieting and connecting with the baseline of creation, of nature. Tuning into the frequency and vibration of the natural world, the nature spirits. The beings and entities that have been in existence, for all of existence, the examples and realities of sustainability and harmony.

It's about becoming receptive to these things. Being open and flowing with them. The spirit guides us, but we have to make ourselves receptive to feel, sense, and respond to this guidance.

Joshua Taflinger

Connection to Keystone pipeline work

When Joshua returned from Standing Rock, he wanted to provide support in Indianapolis for the DAPL resistance. Fortunately, Jim Poyser, one of my fellow Keystone organizers, lived near Joshua and offered support from our Keystone network, which we were pleased to provide. Our Keystone experience was now focused on aiding the DAPL resistance.

I was amazed at the presence of Native people at our DAPL demonstrations. But I was also disappointed that we weren't together long enough during these demonstrations to get to know each other.



(C)Jeff Kisling Dakota Access Pipeline vigil, downtown Indianapolis, Indiana

Decolonial Journey 5 – Two fronts of resistance

July 14, 2025

The work of Sikowis Nobiss related to the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) and the Standing Rock resistance played a large role in the formation and work of the Great Plains Action Society (GPAS), which she founded in 2015. **Cancel KXL** is one of GPAS's **Frontline Land Defense** campaigns, which include **Cancel KXL** and **NO CO2 Pipelines**.

The Vanguard in a Colonized State

How Sikowis Nobiss & Great Plains Action Society Forged the Iowa Front of the #NoDAPL Resistance

The 2016 movement against the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL), known as #NoDAPL, was a historic stand for Indigenous sovereignty, treaty rights, and the sacredness of water. While the world watched the main camps at Standing Rock, North Dakota, a critical, often-overlooked front of the resistance was being waged in Iowa. The pipeline, a prophesied "Black Snake," was slated to cut across 346 miles of the state, yet the Indigenous voice was initially absent. This infographic explores how activist Sikowis Nobiss and her organization, the Great Plains Action Society (GPAS), rose to fill that void, creating a powerful two-front resistance and a lasting legacy for environmental justice.

Timeline of a Movement

2015: An Organization is Born

- Sikowis Nobiss founds the Great Plains Action Society (GPAS) to address the lack of Indigenous representation in Iowa's environmental movement.

April 2016: Resistance Ignites

- The first resistance camp, Sacred Stone, is established near the Standing Rock Sioux reservation, marking the start of the #NoDAPL convergence.

Feb - Aug 2017: Iowa's Frontline

- Nobiss co-founds Little Creek Camp in Williamsburg, IA, creating a physical hub for direct action and opposition on the pipeline's route.

June 2017: Pipeline Operational

- Despite massive global protests and legal challenges, oil begins to flow through the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Post-2017: The Fight Continues

- GPAS applies lessons from DAPL to new fights, leading resistance against CO2 pipelines, while the Standing Rock Tribe continues its legal battle.

A Two-Front Resistance

GPAS executed a brilliant dual strategy: waging a direct, localized fight in Iowa while maintaining a strong, representative presence at the movement's spiritual heart in Standing Rock.

The Iowa Front

Focused on direct action and local organizing. This included co-founding the Little Creek resistance camp on the pipeline route and building crucial alliances with farmers and landowners threatened by eminent domain.

The Standing Rock Front

GPAS leadership spent significant time at the Oceti Sakowin camp, providing solidarity, amplifying the voices of Iowa's Indigenous peoples, and connecting the local fight to the broader struggle for sovereignty.

Legacy of the Black Snake: A New Playbook for Resistance

While DAPL became operational, the movement was a transformative success. It provided invaluable lessons, strengthened inter-tribal alliances, and created a more sophisticated and proactive model for resistance that continues in new environmental battles today.



[Frontline Land Defense](#)

[Cancel KXL](#)

Great Plains Action Society is determined to bring in an Indigenous-led regenerative economy based on compassion and humanity, but we need to fight for it. The white, landowning, heteropatriarchy is not ready to give up their place as the elite in this world and they are holding viciously to their oil and natural resource riches—all that came from the violent colonization of Indigenous lands all over the planet. And, it is up to Indigenous Peoples to lead the way and overcome detrimental colonial-colonialist projects such as the KXL pipeline that threatened the Missouri River—Iowa’s border to the east.

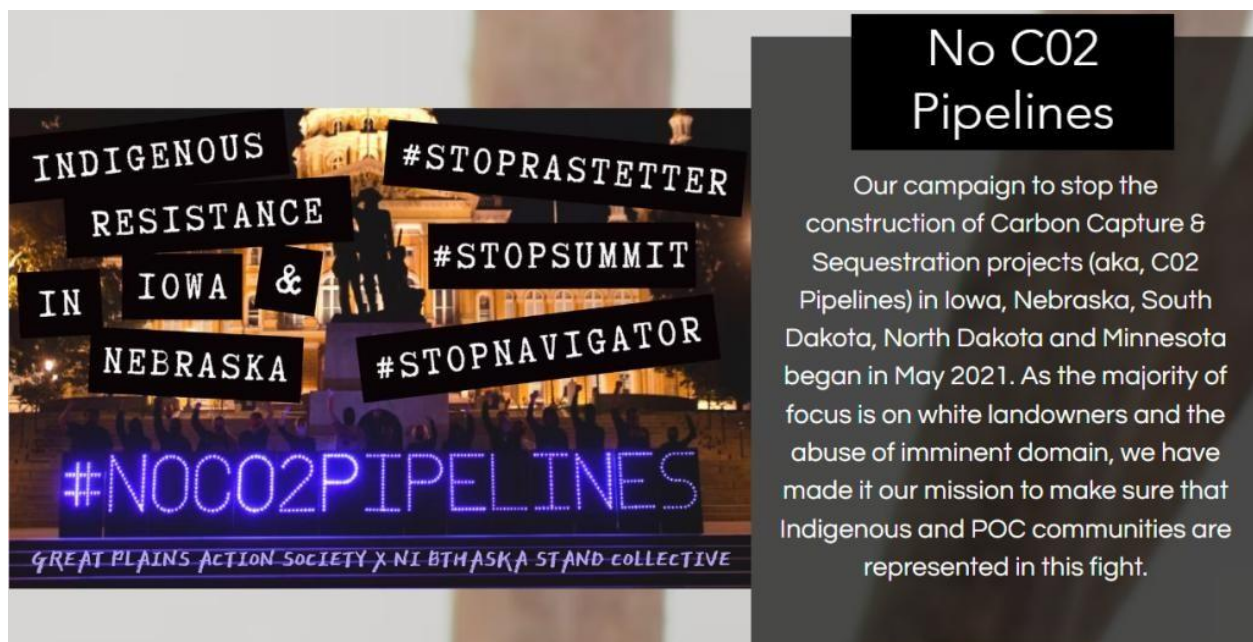
For this reason, Great Plains Action Society helped to keep up the fight against the second Trans Canada project, which was under construction in Montana, South Dakota, and Nebraska. We gave our support to [Ní Btháska Stand](#), which worked non-stop for years to stop the KXL in Nebraska. We also supported the youth from the Cheyenne River Reservation as they continued to fight the KXL in their own territories. Our Operations Director, Trisha Etringer, wrote an

article and scouted the pipeline and created 2 powerful videos to educate the public. In all of our talks at actions, events and conferences, we made it very apparent how man-camps are linked to an increase in the MMIR crisis in Indigenous communities. It was a good day when the pipeline was officially canceled after Biden revoked the key permit.

We believe in abolishing border imperialism and the fact the KXL is being constructed in Nebraska and not Iowa did not stop us from fighting its construction. The Missouri River provides water to millions of people to its east and west and it is Iowa's eastern border. If the KXL bursts, it will affect all who depend on it, regardless of an imperial imposed border— the spill will affect all directions and the Indigenous lands that Great Plains is protecting and where we are from—The Great Plains.

<https://www.greatplainsaction.org/copy-of-cancel-kxl-2>

NO CO2 Pipelines



No CO2 Pipelines

Our campaign to stop the construction of Carbon Capture & Sequestration projects (aka, CO2 Pipelines) in Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota, North Dakota and Minnesota began in May 2021. As the majority of focus is on white landowners and the abuse of imminent domain, we have made it our mission to make sure that Indigenous and POC communities are represented in this fight.

Decolonial Journey 6 – US Bank protest

July 15, 2025

I remember the moment when I woke up in my tent for the first time in the Oceti Sakowin camp north of the Standing Rock Reservation during the fight to stop the Dakota Access Pipeline in 2016. Everywhere I looked Indigenous people were reclaiming space and power. We all felt a deep need to steward the land, because we were tired of the harm that colonizers had inflicted upon us. It was the first time in my life that I truly felt the power of the Land Back movement.

PERSPECTIVES: Why “ReMatriate” is a more inclusive term for returning land to Indigenous peoples by Sikowis Nobiss, reckon, Oct 3, 2023

Opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline (#NoDAPL) became the focus of environmental activists in the Midwest for the next several years.

This is a story of how I sought activists to join with, since I recently moved to Iowa. One of the groups I found doing this work was Bold Iowa, led by Ed Fallon. Another was the Great Plains Action Society, founded by Sikowis Nobiss.

We saw an opportunity to amplify our opposition to DAPL and the epidemic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives (MMIR) because of the large crowds of people who would be attending the Super Bowl that was held in Minneapolis on February 4, 2018.

There is often a link between the violence against Indigenous women and the men working on pipelines. Tragically, it was often difficult to prosecute the perpetrators because, at the time, they could not be arrested and investigated by tribal police if the crime occurred on tribal lands. Later in the year, Sikowis and I lobbied Senator Grassley to support Savanna’s Act, which allows tribal police forces to have jurisdiction over non-Native people on Native land, access to criminal databases, and expanded collection of crime statistics.

US Bank

The Super Bowl was held at the US Bank Stadium in Minneapolis. Minneapolis is the headquarters of US Bank, one of the major funders of the Dakota Access Pipeline.

Ed rented a van and invited anyone interested to travel with him to Minneapolis the day before the Super Bowl. I wanted to go on the trip to Minneapolis so I could meet Ed and the others who were active in #NoDAPL in Iowa.

This is a photo of who was in the van. I knew who Donnielle Wanatee was from the panel discussion she participated in at Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) in 2017. I mentioned that

to her. She and Trisha Etringer, who was also in the van, would join the First NationFarmer Climate Unity March later in the year.



I remember at the time being puzzled by the connection to MMIR. I thought we were going to protest US Bank's funding of the Dakota Access Pipeline. Their headquarters were in Minneapolis, and the Super Bowl was going to be played at the US Bank Stadium. This was the beginning of my education about how interrelated many of these issues are.

Decolonial Journey 7 - Nahko

July 15, 2025

I said this decolonial journey might not evolve in a straight line. As I review my journey, I was reminded of this video of Nahko Bear performing solo at the **Water Protectors Youth Concert** held at the Standing Rock camp during the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) protests. This event was part of the broader movement to resist the pipeline's construction through Indigenous territory and to raise awareness about threats to Indigenous water rights and sovereignty.

Nahko's performance was powerful and moving, with an emphasis on solidarity and spiritual resistance. He communicated a resounding message of **unity and nonviolent direct action**, connecting music to the larger aims of the water protector activism at Standing Rock. The concert brought together youth leaders and allies, using music and stories as a form of activism and motivation for those camped out in opposition to DAPL.

The event was captured in this video. It gives a sense of what was happening at Standing Rock at that time.

Nahko performs in Indianapolis

My friends and #NoDAPL organizers in Indianapolis, Joshua Taflinger and Brandi Herron, organized a vigil at the Old National Centre when they learned Nahko was performing there. There were only six or seven of us at our vigil.

On the marquee, you can see **Nahko & Medicine for the People**. In my ignorance, I didn't know who Nahko was at the time. Members of the band gave us fist bumps as they passed us.

We were soon asked, very politely, to leave the theater grounds.



A few of us local people who were supporting #NoDAPL at the theater where Nahko and Medicine for the People performed.

Decolonial Journey 8 – Sacred journey

July 22, 2025

First Nation-Farmer Climate Unity March

Sacred Journey

One of the most significant experiences I've had related to decolonization was participating in the First Nation-Farmer Climate Unity March. At the beginning of the March, one of the Native people called this our sacred journey.

The March began in Des Moines, Iowa, and continued 94 miles to Fort Dodge, along the path of the Dakota Access Pipeline. The March was organized by Ed Fallon of Bold Iowa and Christine (Sikowis) Nobiss, who was part of Seeding Sovereignty at the time and later founded Great Plains Action Society (GPAS).

The Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) was significant for several reasons. There is a Lakota prophecy of the 'black snake' that would slither across the land, desecrating sacred sites and poisoning the water. DAPL is seen by some as the fulfillment of that prophecy. This demonstrates the fundamental differences of how the resources of Mother Earth were seen by Native versus non-Native peoples. Many non-Native people see the resources of the earth as commodities that could be bought and sold with no regard for the damage done. Sikowis Nobiss said we don't know what spirits there are beneath the ground.

The pipeline damaged the earth as it was built. We saw the scars on the land. We saw water standing in the fields because the topsoil was mixed with the underlying clay when the trenches were refilled, inhibiting the absorption of the water from the rains. The DAPL construction companies had said they would preserve the topsoil, putting it back on top of the clay. One of many broken promises.

Almost two million acres of Boreal forest have been destroyed to uncover the tar sands. The huge tailings ponds used to hold the wastewater from the tar sands extraction are leaking toxic chemicals into the Athabasca River in Northern Alberta. Tar sands mining is incredibly inefficient, with significant energy required for the process. There are increases in cancer rates among those living near the ponds and along the river.

There will be damage to the earth and water when the pipeline leaks. They always leak. And there will be all the fossil fuel emissions when the oil is burned.

The purpose of the March was to create opportunities for a small group of Native and nonNative people to spend an extended time together, to begin to get to know and develop trust among ourselves so that we could work together on issues of common concern. Our small group, comprising approximately fifteen Native and fifteen non-Native individuals, walked and

camped together for eight days, from September 1 to 8, 2018. The many hours of walking down empty gravel roads allowed us to share stories with each other. There was an intentional effort by each of us to eventually spend some time with every other person on the March. We are a tribe

Helping each other through the challenges we faced built solidarity among us. The physical effort involved in walking such distances was created deliberately. We faced several days of walking in the rain for hours. The first night, the winds from a severe thunderstorm were so strong they pushed the sides of the tent in on me. There was so much rain that several of the sites planned for us to spend the night at were underwater. At one point, my friend Donnielle Wanatee said, “We are a tribe.”

As I reflect on the March, I feel so blessed I was led to participate in it, because it changed my life, and made everything I’ve done since then possible. The March was very successful in creating the beginnings of friendship and trust among us. I’ll be writing more about some of the things we’ve done together since.

It concerns me because this reinforces one of the things I learned on that journey, that nonNative people cannot begin to understand and work authentically with Native people until they’ve had similar experiences. How can we create such opportunities for non-Native people that don’t require such an investment of time and struggle? Because facing the hardships together was key to developing solidarity and friendships among us.



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First Nation-Farmer Unity
First Nation peoples and farmers working together



First Nation- Farmer Unity
First Nation-Farmer Climate Unity: The March and Beyond

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<https://firstnationfarmer.com/>

This is a link to a video my friend Matthew Lone Bear created about the beginnings of the March: <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=10156842165052122>

A Journey of Solidarity

An infographic detailing the First Nation-Farmer Climate Unity March and its role as a powerful model for decolonial action and repair.

The March by the Numbers

94

Miles Walked Along
the Dakota Access
Pipeline Route

8

Days of Shared
Journey and Dialogue
(Sept 1-8, 2018)

30+

Individuals Forging a
New Path of Unity

The Context: Why This Matters

The march was not just a protest; it was a deliberate act to dismantle centuries of colonial harm. This harm is rooted in the "Doctrine of Discovery," a 15th-century theological concept that justified European conquest and the seizure of Indigenous lands. This doctrine became embedded in U.S. law, creating a system of "Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence" that dispossessed First Nations and commodified the land, impacting both Indigenous peoples and small farmers. The Unity March represents a direct challenge to this legacy by building relationships to heal a shared history of trauma.

A Framework for Decolonial Action

The Kisling-Nobiss model provides a replicable blueprint for non-Native allies to move from sentiment to meaningful action. It is a journey, not a checklist.

1

Truth & Reckoning

Non-Natives must first learn the true, painful history of colonialism and their own community's complicity.

2

Center Indigenous Leadership

Follow the lead, wisdom, and direction of Indigenous organizers. Shift from "helping" to "being of service."

3

Build Deep Relationships

Forge genuine, personal bonds based on trust, honesty, and shared struggle, not transactional activism.

Tangible Acts of Repair

Move beyond words to concrete actions, including the return of land (Landback) and financial reparations.

Decolonial Journey 9 – Indian boarding schools

July 23, 2025

Christian Colonial Capitalist violence

The concept of **Christian Colonial Capitalist violence** describes an interlocking system where religious ideology, the political project of colonialism, and the economic imperatives of capitalism work in concert to dispossess and harm Indigenous peoples. It states that these three forces are not separate but are fused together, each reinforcing the others to create a comprehensive structure of oppression.

Indian Boarding Schools

The Indian Boarding School system is considered a microcosm of this interlocking violence: a state-funded (**Colonial**), church-run (**Christian**) institution that systematically destroyed Indigenous culture to secure land and create a dependent labor class (**Capitalist**).

I can only remember one instance of the mention of the Indian Boarding Schools from my childhood. I was raised in Quaker communities, and one of my relatives, still living when I was born, had been involved in one of those institutions. That shows how long some of those institutions continued to operate. I was told she went to help the Indian children.

I don't remember these institutions ever being discussed at the Quaker boarding high school I attended.

I call them **institutions** because they were not schools; they were places whose purpose was to forcibly, often violently, assimilate Native children into the white settler colonial culture that had taken over Native lands. The act itself, even without physical assault, is actually violence. And as detailed below, nearly 1,000 children died, or were killed. With increasing numbers found with ongoing investigations.

The Full Reckoning

The History & Consequences of Quaker Indian Boarding Schools

A Paradox of Conscience

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers), known for their commitment to peace and equality, became willing administrators of the U.S. Indian Boarding School system. This infographic explores this complex legacy, from the stated intentions of "civilizing" Indigenous peoples to the devastating, multi-generational trauma that resulted from a policy of forced cultural assimilation.

The Scale of the System

526

Identified Institutions

Total number of Indian boarding schools identified by the National Native American Boarding School Healing Coalition (NABS).

30+

Quaker-Run Schools

Approximate number of schools founded, operated, or significantly influenced by the Religious Society of Friends.

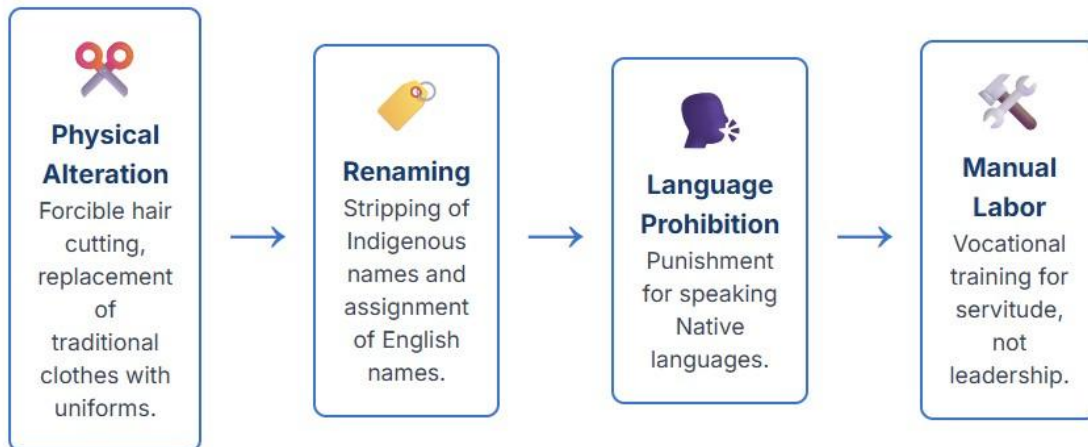
500+

Confirmed Child Deaths

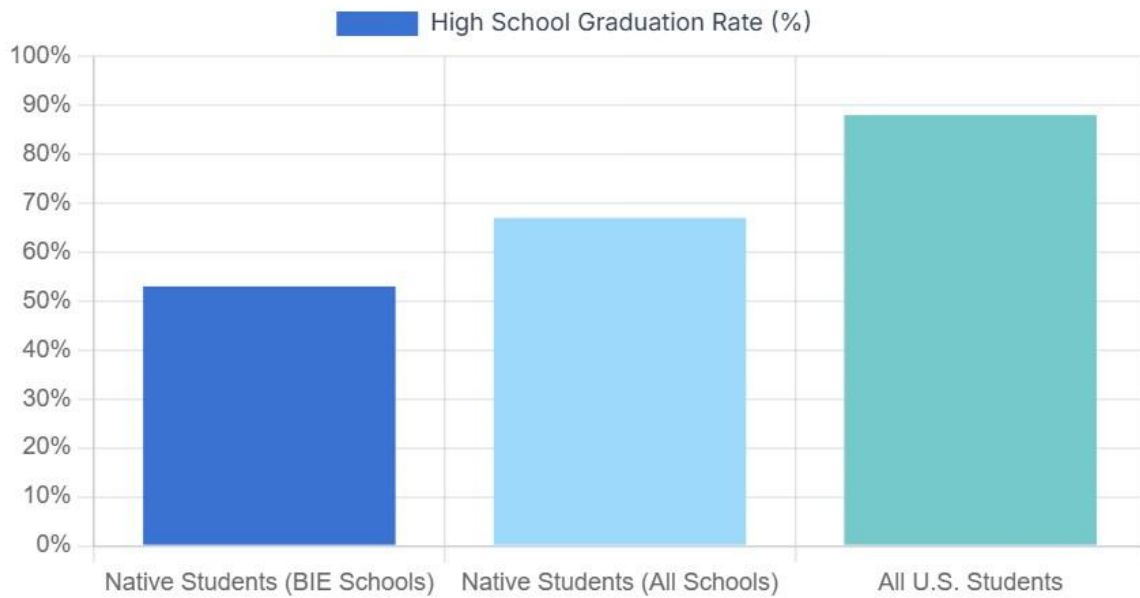
Initial finding from the Dept. of Interior, with the number expected to rise into the thousands.

The Architecture of Assimilation

The boarding schools employed a systematic process to erase Indigenous identity. This was not education; it was a deliberate re-engineering of the human spirit, justified by administrators as a necessary step toward "civilization."



Disparities in Native Youth Education

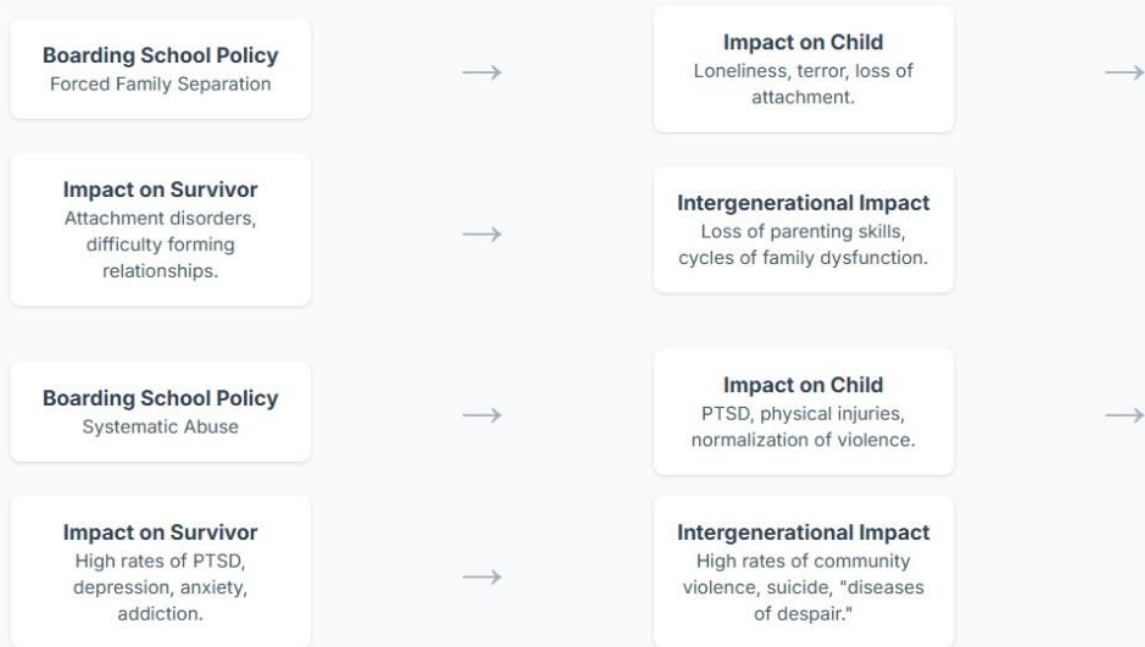


The legacy of the boarding schools is reflected in modern educational outcomes. The high school graduation rate for Native students is the lowest of any demographic group, a direct result of a system designed to devalue their culture and limit their potential.

Bureau of Indian Education (BIE)

The Enduring Wound: Intergenerational Trauma

The violence of the schools did not end at graduation. It created deep, lasting wounds that have been passed down through generations, fueling contemporary crises.



Discovery of unmarked graves

The discovery of unmarked graves at the sites of former Indian Boarding Schools across North America represents a moment of profound and painful public validation for truths long held within Indigenous communities. For generations, survivors and their descendants have spoken of the children who were taken to these institutions and never returned, their stories often dismissed or ignored by the dominant society. The confirmation of these burial sites, beginning with the announcement in May 2021 that ground-penetrating radar had detected the remains of as many as 215 children at the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in British Columbia, Canada, served as a global catalyst. This discovery did not reveal a new history; rather, it unearthed a buried truth, making a chapter of genocidal policy impossible for the wider public and governmental bodies to continue to disregard.

A Buried Truth Unearthed

For over a century, the United States government, often in partnership with religious institutions, operated a system of Indian Boarding Schools. The stated goal was assimilation; the infamous motto was "Kill the Indian in him, and save the man." These were not just schools; they were instruments of a federal policy designed for cultural erasure.

The discovery of unmarked graves at former school sites, beginning in Canada in May 2021, brought this painful history into the global spotlight. It validated the stories survivors had told for generations and catalyzed the first-ever formal U.S. federal investigation into its own policy, revealing a devastating scale of institutional abuse and loss.

The Federal Reckoning

In June 2021, Interior Secretary Deb Haaland launched the Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative. The multi-year investigation sifted through millions of records to officially document the system's scope for the first time. The findings from its two reports paint a grim picture of a vast, federally-funded enterprise.



Growth of Federal Investigation Findings

The investigation's findings grew significantly between its first report in 2022 and its second in 2024, revealing a more extensive and lethal system than previously acknowledged officially.

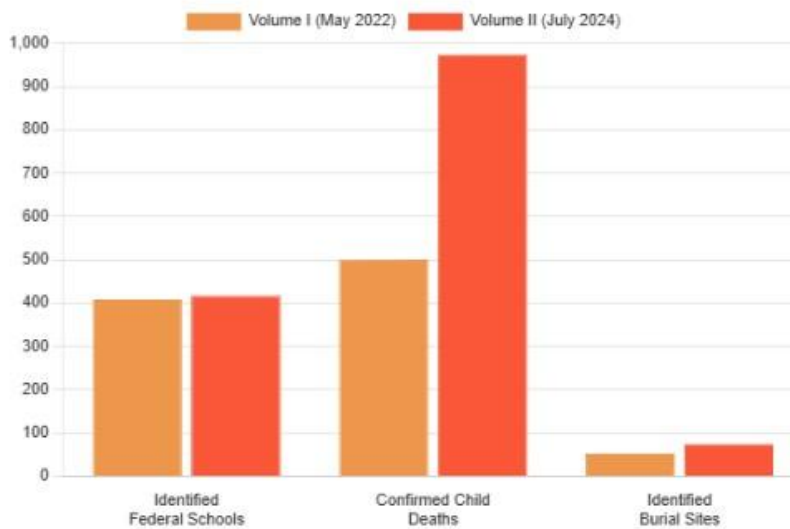


Table: Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative – Key Findings (Vol. I & II)

Metric	Volume I Finding (May 2022)	Volume II Finding (July 2024)
Identified Federal Schools	408	417
Confirmed Child Deaths	>500	>973
Identified Burial Sites	53	74 (at 65 school locations)
Estimated Federal Funding	Not specified	>\$23.3 Billion (FY23 adjusted)

Pathways to Truth and Healing

The movement for justice is led by survivors and Indigenous organizations. It seeks not only to tell the truth but also to create tangible pathways for healing and repair, demanding accountability from the government and religious institutions involved.



Truth

Advocacy for a federal Truth and Healing Commission to investigate and document the full history and ongoing impacts of the boarding school policies.



Justice

Calls for institutional accountability, including formal apologies, repatriation of children's remains, and the return of school lands to Tribal stewardship.



Healing

Investment in culturally-grounded healing programs for individuals and communities, and federal support for the revitalization of Native languages and cultures.

Decolonial Journey 10 – Colonial violence comes home

July 24, 2025

When Colonial Violence Comes Home

The more research I do, the more I analyze Christian colonial capitalist violence, the clearer it becomes that these concepts, which continue their historic assault against Black, Indigenous, and other people of color, are driving the collapse of mainstream, White society today. Not only in this country, but globally.

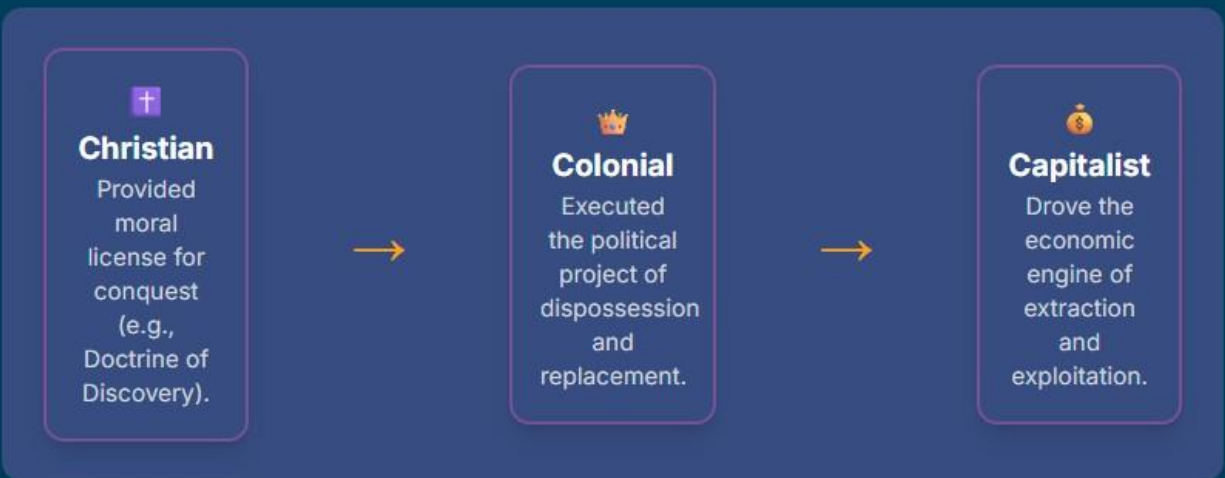
This is why I've sought out and have extensive experiences related to LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and the abolition of police and prisons.

The Unsettled Inheritance

When Colonial Violence Comes Home

A Fused System of Oppression

The United States was founded on a tripartite system of "Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence." These were not separate forces, but a single, interlocking machine where religious ideology justified colonial conquest, and colonial conquest cleared the way for capitalist extraction. This infographic visualizes how the logic of this system, once aimed outward, is now turning inward.

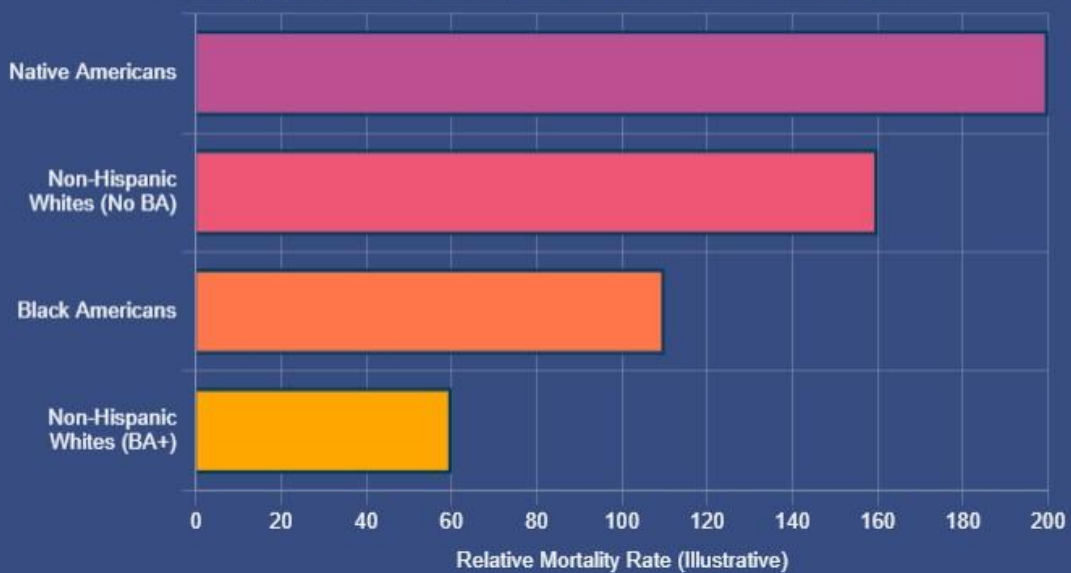


Capitalist Blowback: The Geography of Despair

The system's promise of prosperity to white workers was contingent and has been broken by decades of wage stagnation and deindustrialization. This economic violence has fueled a crisis of "deaths of despair" (suicide, drug, and alcohol-related fatalities), which surged among non-college-educated white Americans who felt their social and economic prospects collapse.

Deaths of Despair by Group

While surging for non-college whites, rates for Native Americans remain highest.



In the context of the infographic, these terms refer to educational attainment: No BA: Means "No Bachelor's Degree." This group includes individuals who have not completed a four-year college degree.

BA+: Means "Bachelor's Degree or higher." This group includes individuals who have at least a four-year college degree.

This distinction is used in the "Deaths of Despair" chart to highlight how the crisis has disproportionately affected non-college-educated white Americans, a key point from the source material.

Colonial Blowback: Militarized Control

The tools and tactics of colonial population control have come home. Through programs like the DoD's 1033 initiative, military hardware has flooded local police departments, blurring the line between soldier and officer and fostering a "warrior" mindset that treats citizens as potential threats.

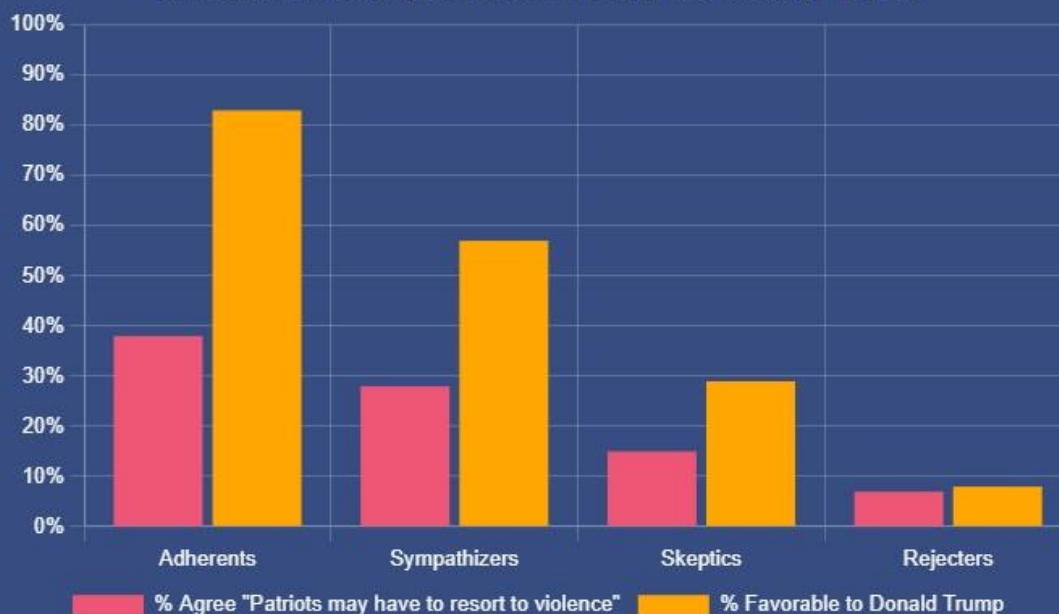
\$7.4B

in surplus military equipment transferred to local police since 1997.

Christian Blowback: The Rise of White Christian Nationalism

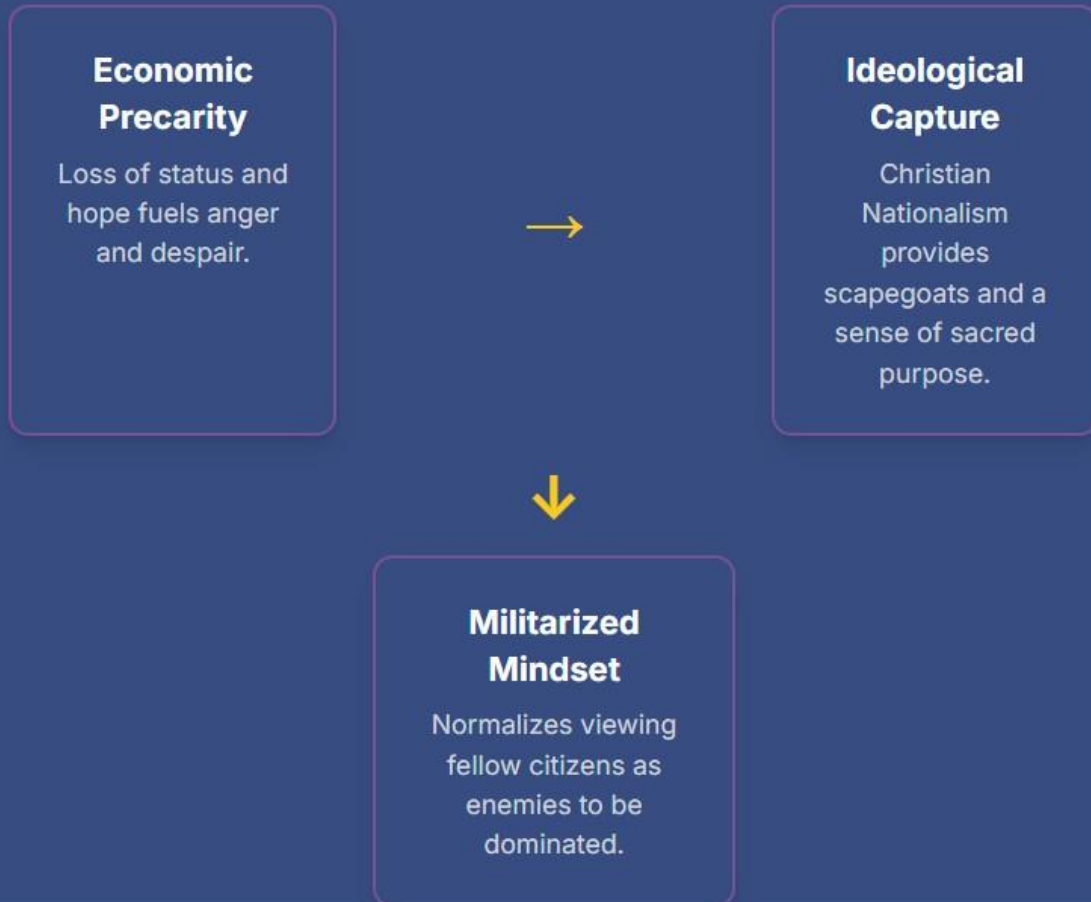
As a response to economic and social precarity, White Christian Nationalism offers a spiritually corrosive narrative. It misdirects legitimate anger away from systemic failures and toward cultural scapegoats, framing political opponents as demonic and justifying anti-democratic actions as part of a holy war. Adherence strongly correlates with conspiratorial thinking and support for political violence.

Christian Nationalism Adherence & Political Views



The Interlocking Cycle of Blowback

These forms of blowback are not separate; they create a self-perpetuating cycle. Economic pain creates a population vulnerable to extremist ideologies, which are then enforced and normalized by a militarized state apparatus.



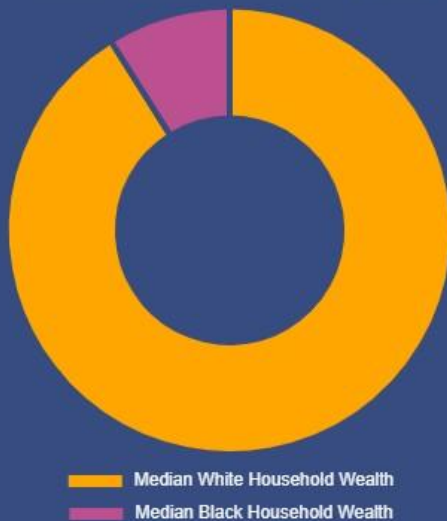
Context is Critical: The Baseline of Violence

The blowback felt by white communities is a consequence of the system, but it is not equivalent to the foundational and ongoing violence the system was designed to inflict on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color. This context is essential.

The Racial Wealth Chasm

The system was built to extract wealth. In 2021, the median white household had more than 10 times the wealth of the median Black household.

Median Household Wealth (2021)



The Carceral State

The system was built for control. Black Americans are incarcerated in state prisons at nearly five times the rate of white Americans.

5x

Higher Incarceration Rate

Holistic Resistance

Because the system is interlocking, resistance must also be holistic. Movements for justice offer powerful antidotes by challenging all three pillars of the system simultaneously.



LANDBACK

Challenges capitalist land ownership and colonial theft by demanding the return of land to Indigenous stewardship.



Mutual Aid

Counters capitalist logic by building community solidarity and collective care outside of transactional systems.



Abolition

Resists the colonial carceral state by seeking to dismantle police and prisons and build systems of community-based safety.

Decolonial Journey 11 – Two Epistles

July 26, 2025

Two Epistles

An **epistle** ([/ɪˈpɪsəl/](#); from [Ancient Greek ἐπιστολή](#) (*epistolé*) ‘letter’) is a writing directed or sent to a person or group of people, usually an elegant and formal [didactic letter](#).

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Epistle>

As a Quaker, I wrestled with the decision to resist the draft during the height of the Vietnam War in 1969. I doubt I could have made that choice without witnessing the example of a number of fellow Quakers who had previously refused military conscription—and accepted imprisonment for standing by their convictions.

Another influence in making that decision was the powerful epistle (letter), [An Epistle to Friends Concerning Military Conscription](#) (see below), which was signed by several Quakers I knew.

My struggle wasn’t about my decision, because it was clear to me that accepting conscientious objector (CO) status was simply empowering the Selective Service System by silencing dissent against it. My struggle was trying to convince my family why I was led to resist, instead of taking the safe way out as a CO.

Those of us who are joining in this epistle believe that cooperating with the draft, even as a recognized conscientious objector, makes one part of the power which forces our brothers into the military and into war. If we Friends believe that we are special beings and alone deserve to be exempted from war, we find that doing civilian service with conscription or keeping deferments as we pursue our professional careers are acceptable courses of action. But if we Friends really believe that war is wrong, that no man should become the executioner or victim of his brothers, then we will find it impossible to collaborate with the Selective Service System. We will risk being put in prison before we help turn men into murderers.

It matters little what men say they believe when their actions are inconsistent with their words. Thus we Friends may say that all war is wrong, but as long as Friends continue to collaborate in a system that forces men into war, our Peace Testimony will fail to speak to mankind.

[An Epistle to Friends Concerning Military Conscription](#)

Christian colonial capitalist violence

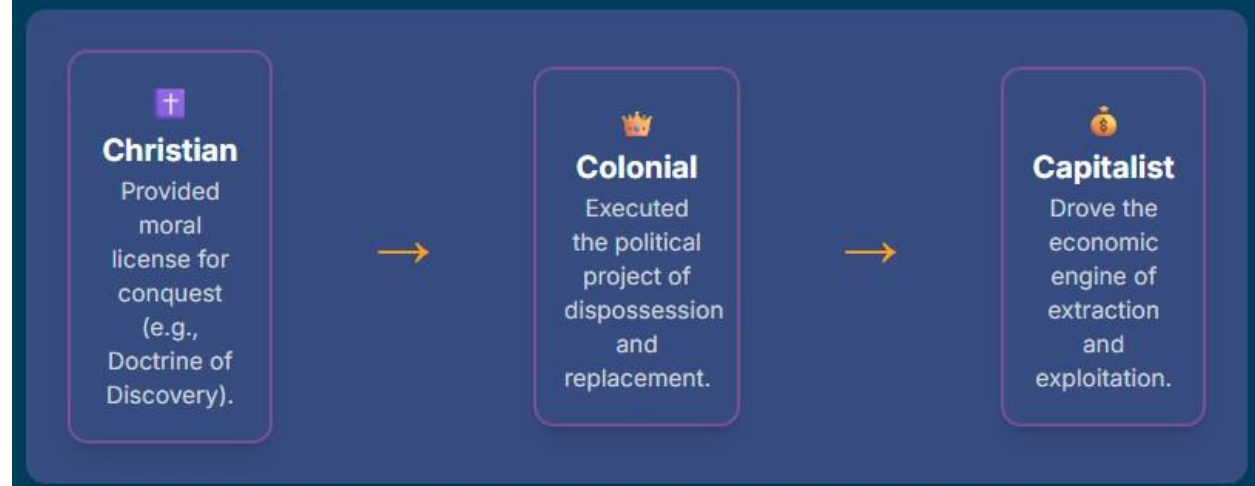
I've been learning from my friend Sikowis Nobiss that the injustices we confront today are deeply interconnected. Religious ideology was used to justify colonial conquest, which then opened the door for capitalist exploitation. This insight made me realize that resistance, too, must be interconnected, challenging Christian colonial capitalist violence together as a unified system.

The Unsettled Inheritance

When Colonial Violence Comes Home

A Fused System of Oppression

The United States was founded on a tripartite system of "Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence." These were not separate forces, but a single, interlocking machine where religious ideology justified colonial conquest, and colonial conquest cleared the way for capitalist extraction. This infographic visualizes how the logic of this system, once aimed outward, is now turning inward.



Holistic Resistance



An Epistle to Friends Regarding Community, Mutual Aid and LANDBACK

Over the past twenty years, I have been engaged in LANDBACK efforts, Mutual Aid initiatives, and advocacy for abolishing police and prisons. Recognizing that Christian colonial capitalist violence forms an interlocking system, I realized that resistance must be equally comprehensive—addressing all components at once. This revealed to me that what I once considered distinct ideas were actually deeply interconnected, a realization that proved transformative.

While trying to convey these insights to Quakers, I recalled the [Epistle to Friends Concerning Military Conscription](#) described above. My October 2023 blog post reflected on a new Epistle I'd written, [An Epistle to Friends Regarding Community, Mutual Aid, and LANDBACK](#). In this

piece, I deliberately placed a quote from Sikowis Nobiss beside my own statement, giving each equal importance and framing them as two facets of a shared truth.

“To protect all living beings and sacred sites is a feminine act and in complete defiance to Christopher Columbus’ worldview, which is the narrative that we counter every time we celebrate Indigenous People’s Day instead of Columbus Day.” — Sikowis Nobiss

I followed with: “It has become clear to some of us who are called Friends that the colonial capitalist economic system and white supremacy are contrary to the Spirit and we must find a better way.” This intentional juxtaposition forms a radical partnership, aligning Indigenous matriarchal perspectives with Quaker spiritual commitment in confronting a common system of oppression.

Syncretic political theology

At the time, I was unfamiliar with the term, but this effort amounted to an act of syncretic political theology: adapting a traditional Quaker format to carry Indigenous-led ideas into my faith community.

From Objection to Liberation

A Confluence of Convictions

This report traces the evolution of conscientious objection from a refusal of military service to a comprehensive resistance against the systems of colonial capitalism. It is a journey from opposing a symptom—war—to confronting the root cause.

The Evolution of a Testimony

The moral logic of non-cooperation has expanded. A comparison of two Quaker epistles, 55 years apart, reveals a radical shift in focus.

1968: Anti-War

"War is contrary to the spirit of Christ and that we cannot participate in it."

Objecting To:
Military Conscription



2023: Anti-System

"The colonial capitalist economic system and white supremacy are contrary to the Spirit."

Objecting To: The
Entire System

Decolonial Journey 12 – Rejection of electoral politics

[August 2, 2025](#)

I've been troubled since writing recently about Epistles related to "Let our lives speak." What does my life say now? Am I living up to the spiritual leadings to reject Christian colonial capitalist violence?

Let Our Lives Speak

A Framework for Building Decolonial Communities Beyond the State

Part I: The Systemic Critique

To build an alternative, we must first diagnose the interlocking system of oppression: a fusion of religious ideology, colonial conquest, and capitalist extraction.

Christian



Provided the moral license for conquest via the "Doctrine of Discovery," which was absorbed into U.S. law to nullify Indigenous land rights.

Colonial



Aimed to permanently replace Indigenous populations with a settler society, using policies of assimilation and violence to achieve this goal.

Capitalist



Fueled the project through land theft and resource extraction, creating economic hierarchies that benefit the settler society.

Rejection of Electoral Politics

The most difficult thing I've faced recently is writing this critique of electoral politics. In large part because my parents and I were among thousands of Quakers and others, religious or not, who put a great deal of time and effort into using electoral politics to try to create change. Many Quakers view their support for the Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) as their primary means of justice work. (Along with the American Friends Service Committee's international work). I imagine it is as difficult for them to consider turning to a just alternative to electoral politics as it has been for me. But I've had years of experience with an alternative that works, Mutual Aid.

FCNL has been a model of integrity in discerning the concerns of Quakers across the country and advocating on our behalf by diligently participating in the many aspects of the legislative process, while maintaining political neutrality. And providing training and tools to support grassroots advocacy.

Just this year, I joined a local FCNL Advocacy Team, because that seemed a possible way around a few of the many forces influencing Congresspeople in Washington. And because the focus of the advocacy at this time relates to my deep concerns about Palestine. I greatly admired the work being done there and the nearly decade-long relationships with local political staff. I participated in a virtual lobby visit and had a letter to the editor published.


And yet, almost no legislation we advocated for had any chance of passing. The vast corporate donations politicians receive and the open antagonism against voters that many legislators publicly display today dispel any semblance of participatory democracy. Checks and balances of the Judicial and Executive branches of government failed.

It was horrifying to witness the rejection of any pro-Palestinian sympathy by the Democratic presidential candidate in the last election. At the same time, the Biden administration sent 2,000-pound bombs that were dropped on the tents of the Palestinians living among the rubble of Gaza and the West Bank. Realizing I could not vote for either the Republican or the Democratic candidate forced me to accept my own rejection of electoral politics.

Holistic Conscientious Objection and Resistance

The State as Guarantor

State militarism is not separate from economic violence; it is the primary tool used to protect the property relations and hierarchies of capital.



Militarism Protects Capital

I've written of 'conscientious objection' to colonial capitalism. This is part of a broader spiritual awakening. An objection to participating in the very processes that one is opposing. Voting, regardless of the candidate, grants legitimacy to a political system that is fundamentally intertwined with capitalism and white supremacy. An example is the U.S. Electoral College, whose historical origins are rooted in the desire of slave-holding states to protect their political power and the capitalist system of human bondage.

Refusing to vote is thus seen not as a failure of civic duty but as a conscious refusal to grant moral or political legitimacy to an inherently unjust system.

This was really impressed upon me when I read the 2025 update to Des Moines Mutual Aid Points of Unity.

We are a revolutionary organization. We are united in a basic agreement that the ultimate goal of revolution is the abolition of the state and of social classes, and that the state's institutions are not a means to achieving that end. We are against participation in electoral politics, because we are for the development of mutual aid as an alternative and widespread institution.

Des Moines Mutual Aid Points of Unity: Updated 2025

Decolonial Journey 13 - Abolition

August 7, 2025

Abolition

Defining colonization as resulting from Christian colonial capitalist violence clarifies the solution:

- Abolition
- LANDBACK
- Mutual Aid





Of the three, I've written far less about abolition than Mutual Aid and LANDBACK. In part, because when I was growing up, abolition referred to the abolition of 'chattel slavery', which was the idea of the complete ownership of a human being. It took a while to understand

- that modern policing is an extension of the 'slave patrols', that protected the economic 'property' of slave 'owners'
- the abolition of slavery via the 13th Amendment in 1865 was incomplete due to its exception clause: "except as a punishment for crime"
- this loophole enabled the rise of convict leasing and, over time, the development of the modern prison-industrial complex (PIC)
- the capitalist economic system is economic slavery for those without wealth
- police are required to enforce capitalist economic policies which distribute wealth to the already wealthy and disenfranchise everyone else
- our armed forces enforce our economic system globally

Systemic Blowback

What has changed is that this system of Christian colonial capitalist violence has begun to fail those who had been doing alright with the capitalist system until recently.

The Cycle of Systemic Blowback

This system of violence eventually turns inward, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of social decay, extremism, and state violence within the dominant society.

1. Capitalist Blowback

Economic precarity and "deaths of despair" rise as the promise of prosperity fails.



2. Christian Blowback

White Christian Nationalism emerges, redirecting economic anger toward scapegoats.



3. Colonial Blowback

Police militarization increases, using colonial tactics on domestic populations.

\$7.4B+

Value of surplus military equipment transferred to local police via the 1033 Program since 1997, fueling Colonial Blowback.

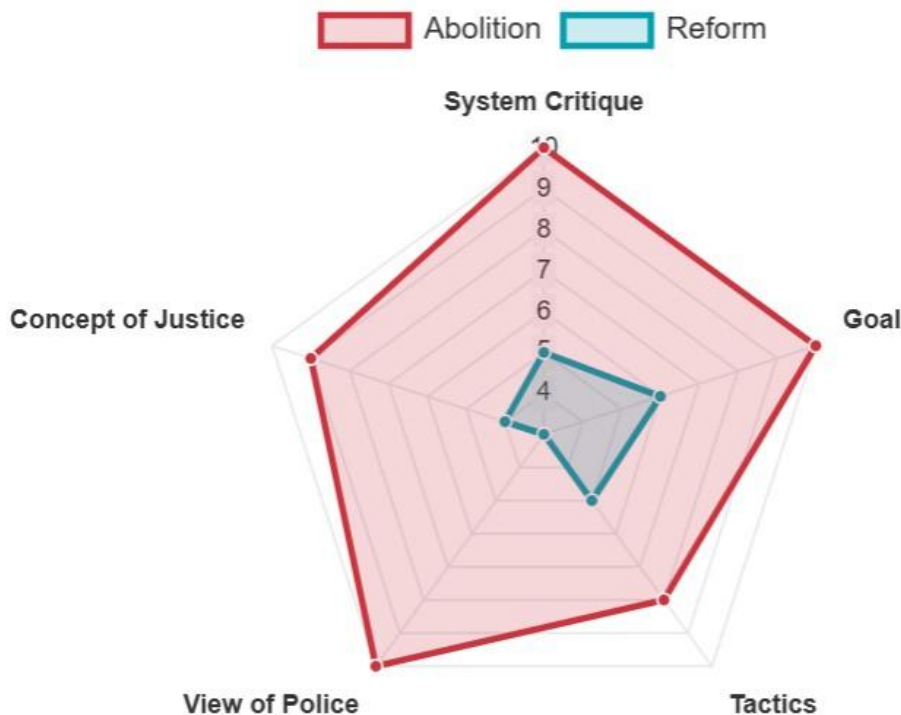
My life didn't get off to a good start regarding police and prisons as I faced a felony conviction and imprisonment for my decision to be a draft resister.

But thinking back to that time, the late 1960s, I also remember there was almost no police presence. This was especially true of rural Iowa, where I grew up. Even when I moved to Indianapolis in 1971, there was little noticeable police presence.

That changed dramatically with the first images I remember seeing of militarized police and equipment on the streets of Ferguson, Missouri, in response to the police killing of Michael Brown in 2014.

Abolition vs. Reform

Abolitionists argue the carceral state is not broken but is working as designed to maintain racial capitalism. This makes it unreformable. This chart compares the foundational differences between the two approaches.



Citations:

[Substack: College students against Cop City – Jeff Kisling](#)

[Substack: Future sacrificed for policing – Jeff Kisling](#)

[Western Friend: Quakers for Abolition Network – Jeff Kisling](#)

[LANDBACK Friends: Prison Abolition Letter Writing Project](#)

[Jeff Kisling blog: Abolition of police and prisons](#)

[Jeff Kisling blog: Concentration camps versus abolition](#)

[Substack: End Police Violence – Jeff Kisling](#)

Western Friend

I contributed my story related to abolition and mutual aid in an article about the Quakers for Abolition Network by my friends Mackenzie Barton-Rowledge and Jed Walsh in the Western Friend, Sept/Oct 2021

Des Moines Mutual Aid Points of Unity: Updated 2025

- 0.** We believe in working shoulder to shoulder and standing in solidarity with all oppressed communities. We ourselves are oppressed, and our mutual aid work is a fight for our collective liberation. We do not believe in a top-down model of charity. Instead, we contrast our efforts at horizontal mutual aid, the fostering of mutually beneficial relationships and communities, to dehumanizing and colonizing charity.
- 1.** We believe in community autonomy. We believe that the communities we live and organize in have been largely excluded from state social services, but intensely surveilled and policed by the state repressive apparatus. Capitalism is fundamentally unable to meet people's needs. We want to build self-sustaining communities that are independent of the capitalist state, both materially and ideologically, and can resist its repression.
- 2.** We are police and prison abolitionists. Abolition and the mutual aid that we practice are inextricably linked. We don't rely on capitalist institutions or the police to do our work. We believe in building strong and resilient communities which make police obsolete, including community systems of accountability and crisis intervention.
- 3.** We work to raise the political consciousness of our communities. Part of political education is connecting people's lived experiences to a broader political perspective. Another component is working to ensure that people can meet their basic needs. It is difficult to organize for future liberation when someone is entrenched in day-to-day struggle.
- 4.** We have open disagreements with each other about ideas and practices. We believe there is no formula for resolving our ideological differences other than working towards our common aims, engaging with each other in a comradely manner, and respecting one another, whether or not we can hash out disagreements in the process.
- 5.** We are a revolutionary organization. We are united in a basic agreement that the ultimate goal of revolution is the abolition of the state and of social classes, and that the state's institutions are not a means to achieving that end. We are against participation in electoral politics, because we are for the development of mutual aid as an alternative and widespread institution.

Part II: The Insufficiency of the Ballot

A principled analysis reveals electoral politics as an ineffective vehicle for transformative change, arguing instead for a holistic conscientious objection.

Non-Collaboration

Voting legitimizes a state intertwined with capitalism and white supremacy. Refusal to vote is a conscious withdrawal of consent from an unjust system.

Critique of Representation

Electoralism diverts energy from more effective actions like mass strikes and building alternative institutions. It creates an illusion of agency while leaving power structures intact.

Limits of Reform

History, like the crushing of Syriza in Greece, shows that the state and global capital are designed to neutralize radical threats, making reform from within futile.

Decolonial Journey 14 - settler-Native-slave

August 11, 2025

The numbering system of this decolonial journey is necessarily arbitrary, as I don't know how the journey will unfold. In part because I try to write from a place of the Spirit. I thought I had completed a review of this country's colonial history. But as I look back, I now see certain things more clearly—or at least differently—as a result of what I've been learning.

One thing I've noticed is that most of the discussion about colonialism in this country focuses on White land theft, and not much on the institution of slavery, despite the significant contribution of enslaved labor to the economic wealth of the country then and now, to generational wealth. The current prison-industrial complex (PIC) continues this by profiting from prison labor.

The reason for this focus is that the initial and primary colonialism White Europeans brought to this land was **settler colonialism**.

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism is a logic and structure of displacement by settlers, using colonial rule, over an environment for replacing it and its indigenous peoples with settlements and the society of the settlers.

Settler-Colonialism, Wikipedia

Extractive Colonialism

I've done a lot of work related to extractive colonialism and the ongoing fights related to oil, mineral, and, increasingly, water extraction.



Planter Colonialism

Planter Colonialism "Colonizers institute mass production of a single crop, such as sugar, coffee, cotton, or rubber. Though a minority, members of the ruling class might belong to an empire that enables their political, legal, and administrative control. Their labor demands cannot be satisfied by the native population, so they import African slaves or indentured laborers, as with the "coolie" and "blackbirding" trades." [A Typology of Colonialism](#) by Nancy Shoemaker, *Perspectives on History*, Oct 2015

Three Colonial Logics

The United States was not built on a single form of colonialism, but a powerful fusion of different logics. While other colonial projects sought resources or labor for a distant metropole, settler colonialism's primary goal is always the land itself. This distinction is crucial.

The U.S. settler project uniquely combined the logic of **elimination** (to acquire land) with the logic of **exploitation** (to make that land profitable), creating a durable and violent system.

Settler
Colonialism



Extractive
Colonialism



Planter
Colonialism



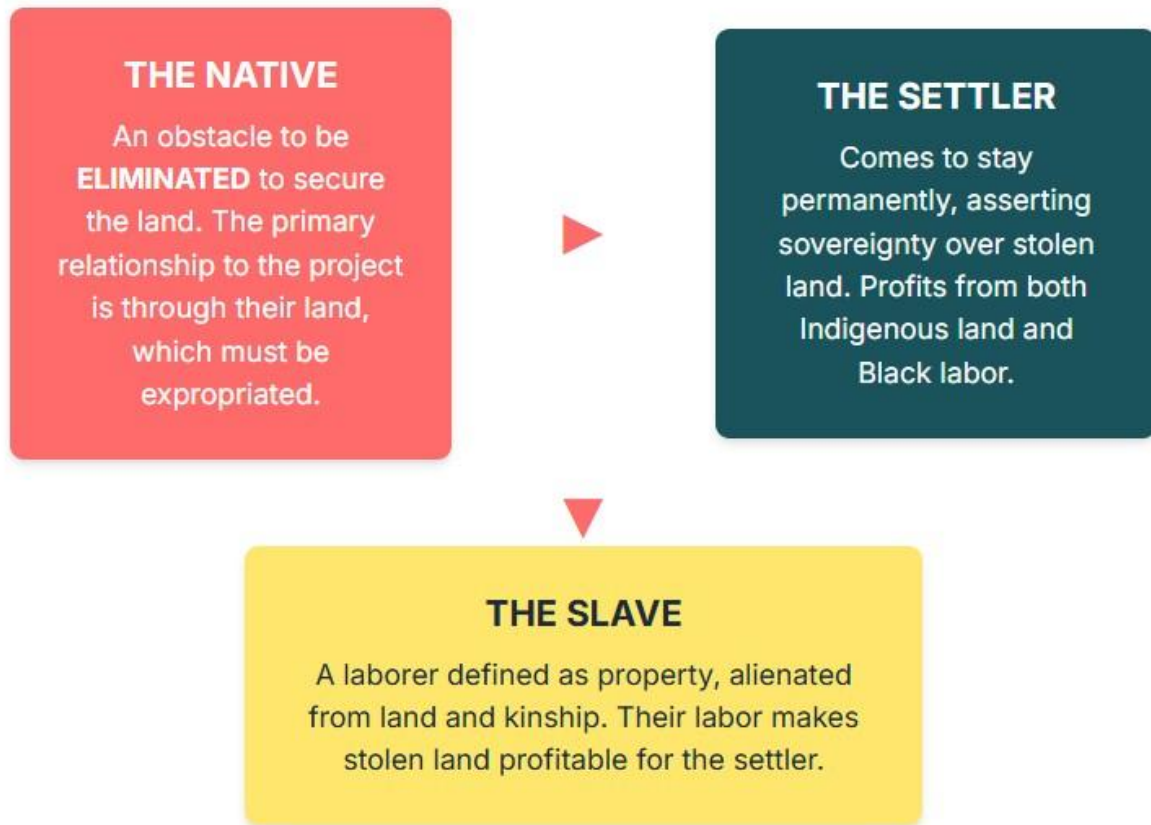
The “other” slavery

Native American slavery “is a piece of the history of slavery that has been glossed over,” Fisher said. “Between 1492 and 1880, between 2 and 5.5 million Native Americans were enslaved in the Americas in addition to 12.5 million African slaves.” [Colonial enslavement of Native Americans included those who surrendered, too](#), News from Brown University, Feb 15, 2027

The Settler-Native-Slave Concept

The Settler-Native-Slave Triad

This framework reveals the three distinct but interdependent positions that define the U.S. settler state. Each position is defined by its relationship to land and labor, and none can be understood in isolation.



Indigenous Elimination

- **Forced Removal:** Militarily displacing Indigenous communities from their ancestral lands to clear territory for settlement, as exemplified by the Trail of Tears.
- **Cultural Assimilation:** Policies designed to destroy Indigenous cultures, languages, and social structures, most notoriously through the system of residential and boarding schools, with the aim of “killing the Indian to save the man”.
- **Biological Assimilation:** Encouraging or forcing intermarriage to “breed out” Indigeneity over generations.

- **Administrative Erasure:** Using legal and bureaucratic tools like blood quantum laws and flawed census records (such as the Dawes Rolls) to define Indigenous peoples out of existence, thereby terminating treaty obligations and land claims.
-

Incommensurable Grammars of Suffering

The struggles against anti-Indigeneity and anti-Blackness are not the same. They operate on different logics, or "grammars," and aim for different political futures. Acknowledging this difference is crucial for meaningful solidarity.

- **Anti-Indigeneity:** A logic of **elimination**. The struggle is for **land and sovereignty** to end the settler occupation.
- **Anti-Blackness:** A logic of **fungibility** (being treated as property). The struggle is for **humanity and ontological recognition** to escape the position of the slave.

Conflicting Logics of Racialization

The settler state developed contradictory racial technologies to manage Black and Indigenous populations. These weren't accidental; they served the core needs of the colonial project.

Blood Quantum

LOGIC: SUBTRACTIVE



Goal: To eliminate Native peoples as a political class. By setting a minimum "degree of Indian blood" for citizenship, the U.S. government aimed to diminish the Indigenous population over time, thereby terminating treaty obligations and land claims.



Designed to make a population disappear.

One-Drop Rule

LOGIC: EXPANSIVE



Goal: To enlarge the category of "Black" to maintain a permanent, inheritable, and exploitable labor class. Any known African ancestry ("one drop") made a person legally and socially Black, ensuring their inclusion in the system of chattel slavery and its aftermath.



Designed to make a population permanent.

Decolonial Journey 15 – Incommensurability and Quaker Conscience

August 12, 2025

AN INCOMMENSURABLE PATH

Visualizing Decolonization, Settler Futurity, and the Quaker Conscience

Looking back over my decolonial journey brings intense sorrow. How could this have happened to this beautiful land and people?


And, as a Quaker, how could we have not only participated in, but significantly contributed to the colonization, to the settler-colonial project? Been leaders in the forced assimilation of Native children?


But the real question is how long will we continue to engage in such injustice? Settler colonialism is ongoing. We settlers continue to profit and oppress.

The Quaker Conundrum: Conscience & Complicity

The Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) presents a powerful case study in the conflict between professed values and historical actions. Their commitment to peace stands in stark contrast to their role in the colonial project, particularly the operation of Indian boarding schools.

Professed Values

 **Peace Testimony:** A core belief in non-violence and trusting in God alone.

 **Inner Light:** Recognizing the divine in every person.

 **Economic Justice:** A stated commitment to fairness and equity.

Historical Complicity

 **30+ Boarding Schools:** Managed institutions designed for cultural genocide.

 **Assimilation Policy:** Actively participated in efforts to "civilize" and erase Indigenous identity.

 **Settlement on Stolen Land:** Benefitted directly from the dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

Incommensurability

Incommensurability in a decolonial context means that the worldviews, goals, and logics of Indigenous sovereignty and settler colonialism cannot be compromised or reconciled. They are mutually exclusive. There is no middle ground. We either continue our colonialism, or we must conscientiously object, and reject the Christian, colonial, capitalist violent systems that continue to enforce it. To turn, instead, to LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and the abolition of police and prisons. ***“We ask ourselves whether we should attempt to transform higher education or burn it down and start anew. We argue that we do need to burn it down.”*** (See below).

The Path Forward: Relinquishing Settler Futurity

For any settler institution, a decolonial path requires moving beyond reconciliation to repentance and restitution. It means embracing the incommensurable demands of LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and Abolition. This is not a rejection of values like peace and justice, but their most rigorous and honest application—an act of faith in a more just world yet to be built.

The Foundation: Settler Colonialism's Logic

Settler colonialism isn't just history; it's an ongoing structure that organizes society through a violent triad defined by one thing: land. This system requires the elimination of the Native to acquire land, and the exploitation of the enslaved to make that land profitable.

The Settler



Comes to stay and replace. Their goal is permanent occupation, transforming Indigenous territory into a "new home" and the basis of their wealth and sovereignty.

The Native



The obstacle to be eliminated. Their inherent sovereignty and relationship to the land must be extinguished through genocide, removal, or assimilation for the settler project to succeed.

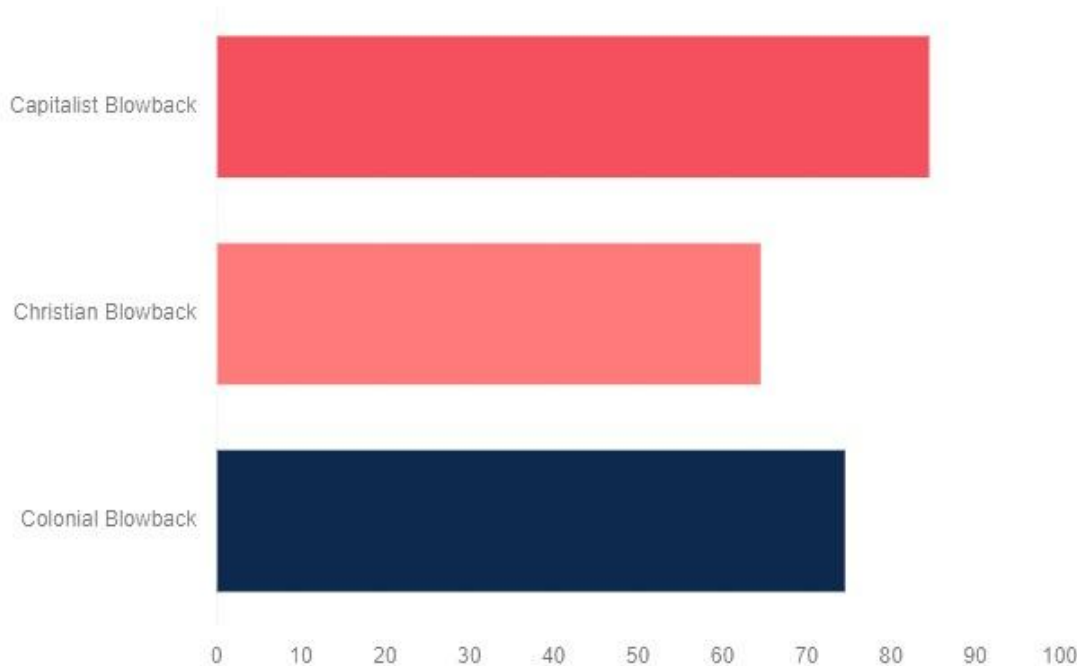
The Slave



Imported to be landless labor. Their work makes the stolen land profitable for the settler, but they are systematically denied any claim to it, rendering them property.

The System's Immune Response: Systemic Blowback

A system built on violence eventually turns that violence inward. This "blowback" isn't a bug; it's a feature. It creates a self-perpetuating cycle that weaponizes the suffering it causes to prevent any real challenge to its power.



This chart illustrates how the three forms of blowback are not equal but build on each other. The widespread pain from Capitalist Blowback creates fertile ground for Ideological Scapegoating, which is then enforced by the tools of Colonial Blowback, creating a reinforcing loop of violence and division.

Incommensurable Praxis: Methods of Decolonization

Decolonization requires actions that are fundamentally incompatible with the settler state. These methods don't seek reform; they seek to dismantle the colonial structure at its roots: its claim to land, its control over social well-being, and its power to punish.

LANDBACK

The literal repatriation of land to Indigenous nations. This is not a metaphor. It's a demand for the restoration of sovereignty, jurisdiction, and stewardship, challenging the state's most foundational claim.

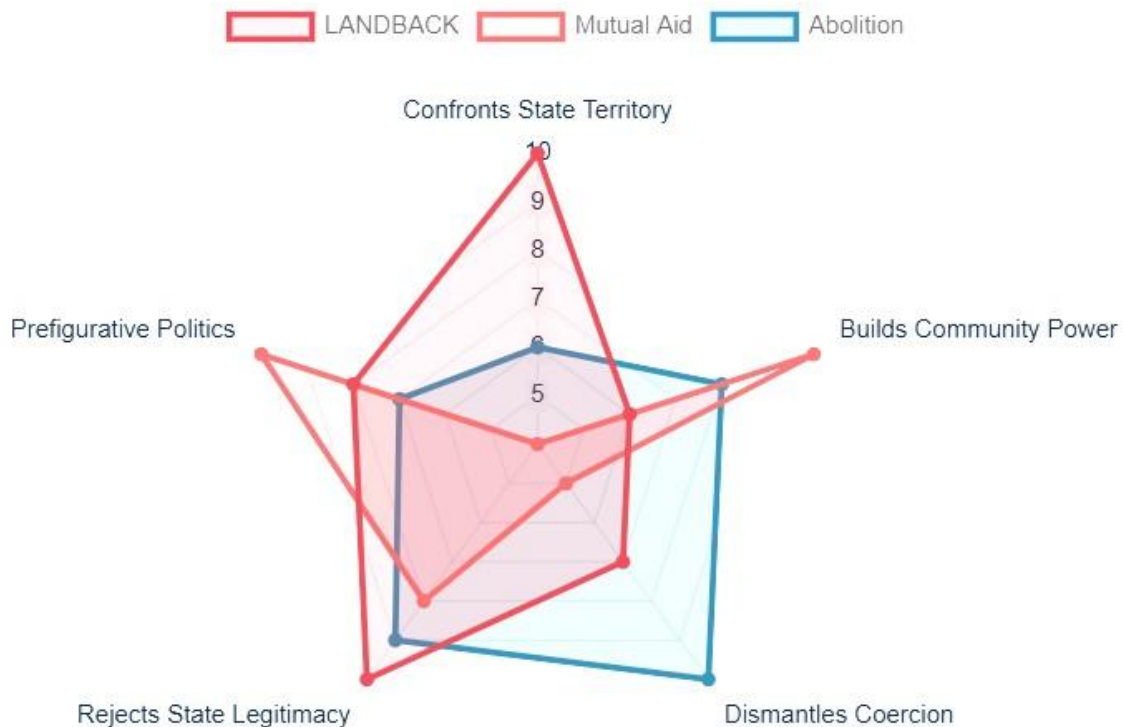
Mutual Aid

Building solidarity-based networks to meet needs the state won't or can't. It's about collective care, not charity, creating autonomous systems that prove the state is not necessary for survival.

Abolition

Dismantling the prison-industrial complex and the carceral logics of punishment and control. It seeks to end the state's primary tool of colonial violence and build new systems of collective safety.

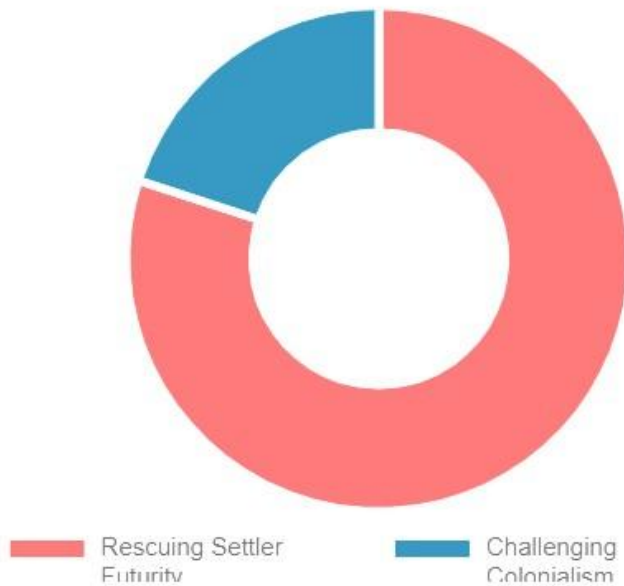
A Comparative Framework



This radar chart compares the three decolonial methods across key metrics. While all are highly antagonistic to the state, LANDBACK most directly confronts its territorial basis. Mutual Aid excels in building autonomous community power, and Abolition focuses on dismantling the state's coercive force. Together, they form a comprehensive challenge to the colonial order.

Benevolence as a Settler Move to Innocence

Impact of Historical "Benevolent" Actions



This chart visualizes the Quaker paradox. The goal of "helping" Native Americans through assimilation was a move to make them *commensurable* with the settler world. This action, while perhaps seen as benevolent, ultimately served to rescue a "settler future" by neutralizing the threat of Indigenous sovereignty, thus reinforcing the colonial structure rather than challenging it.

Burn It Down

As former students and a professor in, but not of, a U.S. liberal arts college, we ask whether our current institutions of higher education are compatible with a project of decolonization. Grounded in our own testimonios and drawing on a genealogy of Western knowledge, we argue that U.S. higher education authorizes and perpetrates settler colonial violence. As such, we find that higher education is not only incompatible, but irredeemably incommensurable with decolonization. Furthermore, based on our experiences surviving this violence, we conclude that the university adapts to inhibit and neutralize institutional reform that might challenge its coloniality. Based on this conclusion, we ask ourselves whether we should attempt to transform higher education or burn it down and start anew. We argue that we do

need to burn it down, and we look to how individuals within the institution already work towards the development of a new social structure, one that will outlast and supplant higher education. We identify three constructive and transformative techniques currently used for this purpose: survival, empowerment, and (theft by) conversion. These techniques are a combination of stances towards, relationships to, and practices within, the institution that build collective futurities no longer dependent upon higher education.

Burn it Down: The Incommensurability of the University and Decolonization by Edwin Mayorga, Swarthmore College Lekey Leidecker, Daniel Orr de Gutiérrez, University of San Francisco, Journal of Critical Thought and Praxis, 2019, Vol 8, No 1, 87-106

NOTE: I created the graphics with Google's Gemini

Decolonial Journey 16 – The Notebook

August 14, 2025

Building the Future

I hope this blog and the notebook I'm sharing today will be a resource for those who conscientiously object to Christian colonial capitalist violence and want to build a just future for all.

Research

I spend a significant amount of time doing research. More recently, I've been learning to use some artificial intelligence tools. I share great concerns about the potential consequences of artificial intelligence in general.

The question isn't whether artificial intelligence systems can process vast amounts of information to provide insights into the data. The problems can occur when they try to draw conclusions based upon inaccurate or incomplete data.

Google Gemini

The two tools I use are Google **Gemini** and Google's **NotebookLM**. Google Gemini uses "reasoning" models. When these models discover they need additional information in order to answer the user's query, they explain what they are looking for in an ongoing transcript of their reasoning process. This displays why the information is sought, and citations to where it was found. This transparent and intelligent transcription of the process is always provided by Gemini, giving you confidence in the gathered results. Gemini can also create web pages, quizzes, and infographics based upon its results. I use the infographics extensively.

Google NotebookLM

Google **NotebookLM** has consistently won praise for its results, because it uses **sourcebased** analysis. This means the analysis is done **ONLY** on the sources of information you load into your notebook project. This nearly completely eliminates the incorrect results often seen in the commonly used AI Chat applications.

So, I use **Gemini** to do the reasoning research to come up with the information and sources I can trust. I then load those sources into my **NotebookLM** project, and can then begin to explore what is in the project.

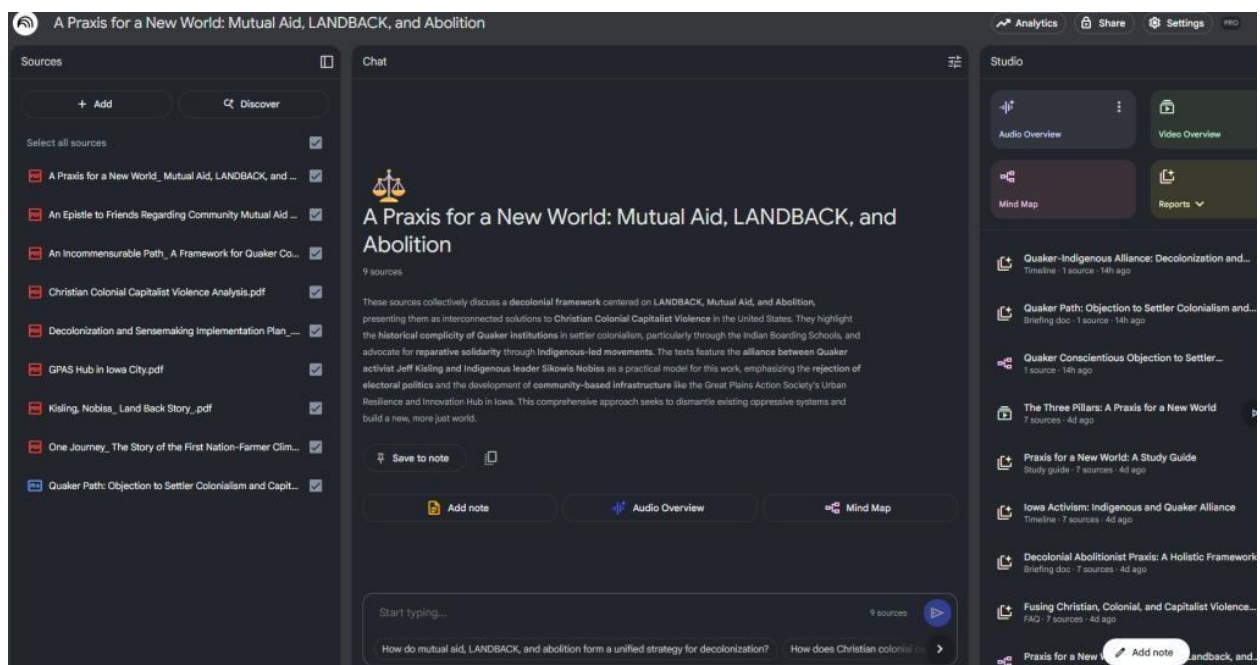
NotebookLM (LM-language model) is free of charge, and can be run in a web browser, or smart phone application. I use my phone app quite a bit as thoughts come up when I'm away from my laptop.

[A Praxis for a New World: Mutual Aid, LANDBACK, and Abolition](#)

Sharing with you

I'm sharing my NotebookLM notebook, [A Praxis for a New World: Mutual Aid, LANDBACK, and Abolition](#) with you. The link will work even as I expand the notebook in the future.

<https://notebooklm.google.com/notebook/661e8a2e-88da-4ce9-8f13-e70ba450630d>



Sources

The **Sources** included in the project are listed in the pane on the left.

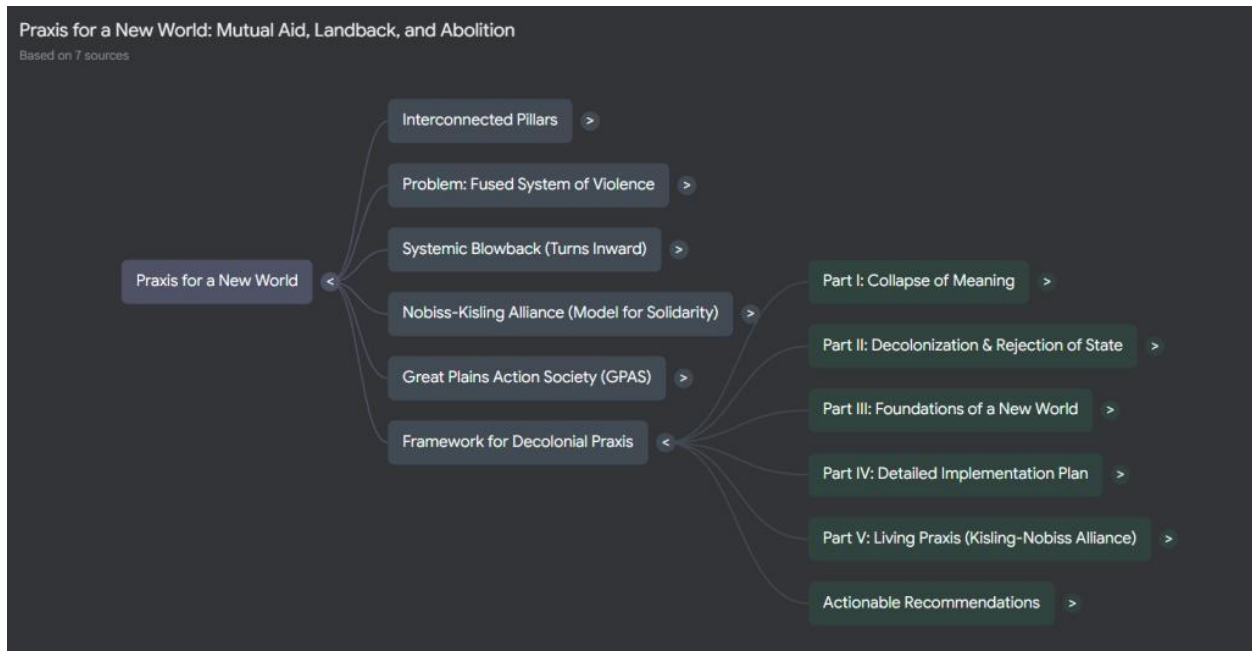
Chat box

The **Chat box** is in the center pane to allow interaction that way. Each response builds on the previous interactions. Suggested questions are listed and will run if you click on them.

Studio

The **Studio** is in the right panel. There are many interesting things you can do in the **Studio**.

Mind Map



This is part of the mind map that is created by clicking the Mind Map button. This is a realtime visualization. You can click on the link to expand the topic (>)

When you click on part of the mind map, further explanation appears in the **Chat Box**.

Resources

The following are products of this NotebookLM project and can be found on the website's [Resources page](#).

Video

Clicking the **Video Overview** button in the Studio creates a video about your notebook project.

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Audio Overview

Clicking the **Audio Overview** button in the Studio creates a two-person podcast about your notebook project.

Reports

NotebookLM can create a number of very useful reports, which currently include:

- **Briefing Document:** A summary of the sources of information included in your NotebookLM notebook project.
- **Timeline**
- **FAQs** (Frequently Asked Questions)
- **Study Guide**

I hope you'll explore my [A Praxis for a New World: Mutual Aid, LANDBACK, and Abolition](#) NotebookLM project.

Decolonial Journey 17 – This is the question

August 15, 2025

My views on colonization:

- The Christian church embraced settling land not occupied by Christians
- European settlers successfully colonized this land, now known as the United States
- The land was enclosed and stolen by settlers
- Settler genocide nearly eradicated the Indigenous populations
- Churches, including Quakers, implemented the Indian Boarding schools to forcibly assimilate Native children into the now dominant settler culture
- The institution of chattel slavery was used to provide stolen labor for the capitalist system
- This created an interlocking system of Christian colonial capitalist violence
- These interlocked systems are extremely resistant to change, mutually supporting each other
- A holistic approach to decolonizing is therefore required
 - LANDBACK – to return the land to Native sovereignty
 - Mutual Aid – to replace the unjust capitalist economic system
 - Abolition of police and prisons – stop the carceral system that violently enforces colonial capitalism

The Question

The question is, do we continue to accept the current dominant systems of colonial capitalist violence?

I believe we must stop our complacency and complicity in accepting the ongoing injustices of colonization.

A Matter of Conscience

Quakers, such as I, have always embraced the concept of letting our lives speak, living our lives as consistently with our beliefs as possible. I reject the Christian colonial capitalist violent

systems of the dominant culture of this country. How to do so is what my past decade of experience and writing have been devoted to. What this new blog is focused on.

A Cautionary Tale

Our (Quaker) history regarding the Indian Boarding schools should be a cautionary tale. We significantly aided the colonization of this land.

It has become clear to some of us who are called Friends that the colonial capitalist economic system and white supremacy are contrary to the Spirit and we must find a better way. We conscientiously object to and resist capitalism and white supremacy.

Jeff Kisling, An Epistle to Friends Regarding Community, Mutual Aid and LANDBACK

AN INCOMMENSURABLE PATH

Visualizing Decolonization, Settler Futurity, and the Quaker Conscience

Incommensurability

Incommensurability in a decolonial context means that the worldviews, goals, and logics of Indigenous sovereignty and settler colonialism cannot be reconciled. They are mutually exclusive. There is no middle ground. We either continue our colonialism, or we must conscientiously object, and reject the Christian, colonial, capitalist violent systems that continue to enforce it.

The Foundation: Settler Colonialism's Logic

Settler colonialism isn't just history; it's an ongoing structure that organizes society through a violent triad defined by one thing: land. This system requires the elimination of the Native to acquire land, and the exploitation of the enslaved to make that land profitable.

The Path Forward: Relinquishing Settler Futurity

For any settler institution, a decolonial path requires moving beyond reconciliation to repentance and restitution. It means embracing the incommensurable demands of LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and Abolition. This is not a rejection of values like peace and justice, but their most rigorous and honest application—an act of faith in a more just world yet to be built.

Decolonial Journey 18 – Settler Futurity

August 16, 2025



I recently learned the term **settler futurity** which has been insightful. Its included in the graphic above, “**Visualizing Decolonization, Settler Futurity, and the Quaker Conscience.**”

Guided Learning

Several artificial intelligence systems have recently offered new applications for **Guided Learning**. I’m using Google’s Gemini, which is free of charge so you can do your own guided learning on any desired subject: <https://gemini.google.com/guided-learning>

Insights from learning science show that people learn best when they actively engage with information. This principle is at the heart of our work. In close partnership with educators, students, and pedagogical experts, we developed [LearnLM](#), a family of models fine-tuned for learning and grounded in educational research. Today, with those capabilities infused in Gemini, we’re introducing Guided Learning—a new experience designed to act as a personal learning companion.

Going beyond the answer with Guided Learning

Guided Learning encourages participation through probing and open-ended questions that spark a discussion and provide an opportunity to dive deeper into a subject. The aim is to help you build a deep understanding instead of just getting answers. Guided Learning breaks down problems step-by-step and adapts explanations to your needs — all to help you build knowledge and skills.

[Guided Learning in Gemini: From answers to understanding](#) by Maureen Heymans, Google, August 6, 2025

You can view the project I’m writing about this morning here:

<https://gemini.google.com/app/d9478ecc84974731>.

Each person's path through Guided Learning will be different, because at the end of each segment you are giving a number of choices of what to explore next.

This seems like a good opportunity for me to explore this, so I'm sharing the following transcript from the Guided Learning I'm doing now about **settler futurity**. You can view the project I'm writing about this morning here:

<https://gemini.google.com/app/d9478ecc84974731>.

At its core, **settler futurity** is the idea that settler colonialism isn't just about taking land in the present, but also about controlling the very idea of the future. It's a way of thinking that presents the settler society as the only possible future—as a permanent and natural reality.

To get a handle on this, we can break it down. Would you rather explore:

1. The basic building blocks of **"settler time"** that this idea of the future is built on?
2. The specific methods used to **replace Indigenous futures** with a settler one?
3. The decolonial response, which is all about asserting **Indigenous temporal sovereignty** (or control over one's own time)?

1. What are the basic building blocks of **"settler time"** that this idea of the future is built on

Scholar Mark Rifkin, who coined the term, explains that **settler time** is a way of experiencing time that treats the settler nation (like the U.S.) as a kind of permanent and natural "container" for all of history. It's the unquestioned background for how we mark time, which makes the settler presence seem inevitable.

This framework operates through two main connected ideas:

- **The Anachronization of the Native:** This involves placing Indigenous peoples firmly in the past, treating them as relics or anomalies from a "bygone era" rather than as contemporary peoples.
- **The Chronogeopolitics of Progress:** This is the logic that justifies taking land by framing it as "progress"—a necessary step in a linear march toward a future defined by the settler society.

The Anachronization of the Native

Anachronization is just a fancy word for placing something in the wrong time period. In this context, it's a key strategy of settler time that works to politically erase Indigenous peoples by denying their existence in the present.

It works by creating what the documents call a “**temporal double bind**”. Indigenous peoples are either:

1. **Stuck in the Past:** Portrayed as unchanging relics from a “bygone era”. Any expression of their culture is seen as a historical reenactment rather than a living practice.
2. **Forcibly Assimilated into the Present:** They are “brought into the present,” but only on settler terms, which requires them to adopt non-native ways of life and abandon their own.

This isn’t just a simple mistake; it has a deep political purpose. For settlers to define themselves as “modern” and “progressive,” they need a figure to contrast themselves against—one they can label as “pre-modern” and “static”. This makes the “anachronistic Indian” a core political and psychological requirement for the settler’s own sense of identity and belonging.

The Chronogeopolitics of Progress

Let’s look at the “**Chronogeopolitics of Progress.**” It’s a big term, but it’s simpler than it sounds if we break it down:

- **Chrono-** = Time
- **Geo-** = Land/Space
- **-Politics** = Power

So, it’s about how ideas of **time** are used to exert political control over **land**.

The core idea is that settler colonialism frames the dispossession of Indigenous peoples as a natural and inevitable story of “progress.” It presents history as a linear march forward, and in this story, taking land is just a necessary step toward a better, more “civilized” future.

A Concrete Example: The Allotment Program

A great example of this in action was the U.S. allotment program. The policy was designed to “civilize” Indigenous peoples by forcing them to adopt “normative non-native life cycles,” like private property ownership and farming instead of communal living.

This **temporal argument**—the idea that Indigenous peoples needed to *progress* into the future—served as the direct justification for the **spatial act** of breaking up communal tribal lands. This, in turn, made that land much easier for non-natives to take over.

Based on that example, how would you describe the relationship between the *story* of progress and the actual *act* of taking land? What does one make possible for the other?

2. What were the specific methods used to **replace Indigenous futures** with a settler one?

Settler futurity is built through several key methods that work together to colonize time and normalize the settler state as the only possible future. These mechanisms aim to project colonial permanence while foreclosing Indigenous alternatives.

Linear Progress Narrative and Self-Supersession

The core engine of settler futurity is a **linear narrative of progress** that claims the future belongs to settler norms and values. This creates a “settler/settled future”—an endpoint where colonialism is successfully completed and naturalized.

This is connected to the logic of “**self-supersession**,” a concept from scholar Lorenzo Veracini. The goal is for the settler society to eventually erase its own violent colonial character and present itself as a legitimate, “post-colonial” nation. Settler futurity imagines a future where the original violence of settlement has been so thoroughly normalized that it becomes invisible, requiring a “future of forgetting”.

Future-Oriented Replacement

Settler futurity is also an active and “**future-oriented project of replacement**”. This logic, described by scholars Eve Tuck and Rubén Gaztambide-Fernández, depends on the “continued and complete eradication of the inhabitants of contested land”.

This replacement is pursued not just through physical violence but also through epistemological means—replacing ways of knowing. It’s a constant projection of a future where Indigenous presence, sovereignty, and ways of being have been fully supplanted by the settler society. For example, educational systems may steer children away from relationships with the natural world and toward becoming “techno-rational adult human subjects,” which severs ties to many Indigenous frameworks.

Temporal Recognition as Assimilation

Perhaps the most sophisticated mechanism is what's known as "**temporal recognition**". On the surface, it seems progressive to recognize Indigenous peoples as modern and existing in the same time as settlers.

However, this recognition often acts as a powerful tool for assimilation. It works by inserting Indigenous peoples into settler temporal frameworks. It demands that their existence become understandable according to "dominant non-native geographies, intellectual and political categories, periodizations, and conceptions of causality". The goal is still elimination, but the method shifts from "overt erasure to managed inclusion". In effect, the price of being recognized as "present" within the settler state is the loss of a self-determined future.

3. What is the decolonial response, which is all about asserting **Indigenous temporal sovereignty** (or control over one's own time)?

The primary decolonial response to the colonization of time is the assertion of **Indigenous**

temporal sovereignty. This is not about trying to find a place within the settler's timeline, but about affirming and practicing distinct, self-determined ways of being in time that are plural, land-based, and interrupt the forward march of settler futurity.

Defining Temporal Sovereignty

Indigenous temporal sovereignty is the exercise of political independence, authority, and control over time itself. This goes beyond simple governance to include the power to shape and organize social life, collective memory, cultural practices, and historical narratives according to Indigenous frameworks. It is the inherent right of peoples to their own pasts, presents, and futures, grounded in their unique relationships to land and community.

How Indigenous Time Works Differently

Indigenous ways of being-in-time act as a direct **counter-logic** to the singular, linear progression of settler time. Key characteristics include:

- **Plurality and Divergence:** They reject a single, universal timeline. Instead, they embrace "varied temporal formations that have their own rhythms" which emerge from multifaceted relationships.

- **Orientation to Peoplehood and Territory** : Time is not an abstract container. It is experienced and understood in relation to the collective group and the “ongoing histories of their inhabitation” in specific territories.
- **Duration as Immanent Flow:** Time is felt as a continuous, qualitative flow that connects memory, sensation, and action. This defies the settler’s segmented and quantifiable timeline.
- **Prophetic Temporality:** Many Indigenous frameworks embrace a “prophetic temporality,” which allows for complex, non-linear, and cross-temporal communications. This worldview acknowledges the agency of non-human, spiritual, and ancestral forces, which radically challenges the secular, materialist historicism that underpins settler time.

The Strategy: A Politics of Refusal

A key strategy for enacting temporal sovereignty is the **politics of refusal**. Drawing on the work of scholar Audra Simpson, this involves a rejection of being translated into the terms and frameworks of the settler state.

It is a specific **refusal of the offer of “temporal recognition”** because the price of that recognition is assimilation into a present and future defined by the settler. It is a powerful assertion that Indigenous peoples have an existence that is not dependent on settler norms and frames for its legitimacy.

Follow up

I wasn’t aware of the concept of the politics of refusal, so I asked Gemini to, “**Explain more about the work of the politics of refusal by Audra Simpson.**” Here is the response:

Based on the provided documents, the work of Audra Simpson’s **politics of refusal** is a key strategy for enacting temporal sovereignty. It functions as a political alternative to seeking recognition from the settler state, which often requires Indigenous peoples to conform to the state’s own terms and frameworks.

Here is a breakdown of how it works:

What Is Being Refused?

- **The Terms of Recognition:** Refusal is a rejection of being translated into the terms of the settler state, including its temporal frameworks. It specifically refuses the offer of “temporal recognition” because accepting it requires assimilation into a settler-defined present.

- **Multicultural “Difference”:** It pushes back against being defined simply as a “different” culture within the state’s multicultural framework. Simpson argues that having Indigeneity treated as a “culture that is defined by others and will be accorded a protected space of legal recognition” is “politically untenable and thus normatively should be refused”.

What Is Being Asserted?

- **The Right to Self-Definition:** It insists on the right for Indigenous peoples to exist according to their own political traditions and ways of being in time (temporalities).
- **Existence Beyond State Legibility:** This right is asserted even if it means being “illegible or appearing ‘anomalous’ to the colonial state”.
- **Untethered Existence:** Ultimately, it is a powerful assertion that Indigenous peoples have an existence that is “not a priori tethered to settler norms and frames”. It is about “refusing to go away, to cease to be, in asserting something beyond difference”.

An Important Clarification

The politics of refusal is not a claim to live completely outside the influence of settler colonialism. Simpson presents Indigenous peoples as “operating in the teeth of Empire, in the face of state aggression”. Therefore, refusal is not about being “unimplicated” in the realities of colonialism, but about insisting on a self-defined existence despite those pressures.

Graphics

This was produced when I asked the Guided Learning project to “**Create a graphic from the above.**”

The Colonization of Time

Three Mechanisms of Settler Futurity



Linear Progress & Self-Supersession

Settler futurity is driven by a narrative of linear progress, where history moves in a straight line toward a future defined by settler norms. This is the core engine of colonial time.

Key Idea: The "Settled" Future

The ultimate goal is ****self-supersession****: to erase the violence of colonization from memory, making the settler state appear natural and "post-colonial." This creates a future of forgetting, where dispossession is reframed as a necessary step in the nation's creation.



Future-Oriented Replacement

This is an active project aimed at the complete eradication of Indigenous peoples from the land—not just physically, but also epistemologically (by replacing their ways of knowing).

Key Idea: A War on the Future

The settler's imagined future depends on a constant projection of a tomorrow where Indigenous presence and sovereignty have been fully supplanted. It's a war of attrition fought on the battlefield of the future to ensure settlers can inhabit the land without being confronted by prior claims.



Temporal Recognition

This is the most subtle mechanism. It appears progressive by recognizing Indigenous peoples as "modern," but it does so by forcing them into the settler's timeline and framework.

Key Idea: Assimilation into "Now"

The goal shifts from overt erasure to ****managed inclusion****. By saying, "You are now part of our present," the settler state acknowledges Indigenous existence but neutralizes its political and temporal threat. The price of being recognized is the forfeiture of a self-determined future.

The Result: A Colonized Future

These mechanisms work together to create a singular, inevitable-seeming future where the settler state is permanent and Indigenous sovereignty is a relic of the past. Understanding this is the first step toward decolonization as a temporal project—reclaiming Indigenous futures.

Infographics

There are other **tools** available for your Guided Study.

One is the **Canvas**, which can also create graphics. This is the Infographic produced when I asked the Guided Learning project to **"Create an infographic from the above."**

The Colonization of Tomorrow

How Settler Futurity Replaces Indigenous Futures



1. Linear Progress & Self-Supersession

Settler futurity is driven by a powerful story: a single, straight timeline of "progress" where the settler society is the inevitable endpoint. This narrative works to eventually erase its own violent origins, aiming for a future where the settler nation appears natural and "post-colonial"—a process called **self-supersession**. The ultimate goal is a future of forgetting, where the foundational violence is reframed as a necessary step in the nation's creation.



2. Future-Oriented Replacement

This is an active project, not just a passive hope. The settler's imagined future depends on the **"continued and complete eradication"** of Indigenous peoples. This isn't only about physical violence; it's also about replacing Indigenous ways of knowing and being. By projecting a future where Indigenous presence and sovereignty have been fully supplanted, this logic aims to ensure that future generations of settlers can inhabit the land without being confronted by prior claims.



3. Temporal Recognition as Assimilation

This is the most subtle mechanism. It seems progressive to recognize Indigenous peoples as "modern" and part of the present. However, this **"temporal recognition"** often serves as a tool for assimilation. It forces Indigenous existence to become understandable only within the settler's timeline and categories. The goal remains elimination, but the method shifts from erasure to **managed inclusion**. The price of being seen as "present" is giving up a self-determined future.

Decolonial Path for Quakers 1 – Quaker testimonies

August 18, 2025

Quakers have a deep spiritual obligation and need to confront the historic and ongoing injustices of the **Christian colonial capitalist violence** of this country, as my Native friends refer to it. I'm now switching from reviewing my decolonial journey to exploring what this means in practical terms.

Colonization of this land

- The Christian church embraced settling land not occupied by Christians
- European settlers successfully colonized this land, now known as the United States
- The land was enclosed and stolen by settlers
- Settler genocide nearly eradicated the Indigenous populations
- Churches, including Quakers, implemented the Indian Boarding schools to forcibly assimilate Native children into the now dominant settler culture
- The institution of chattel slavery was used to provide stolen labor for the capitalist system
- This created an interlocking system of Christian colonial capitalist violence
- These interlocked systems are extremely resistant to change, mutually supporting each other
- A holistic approach to decolonizing is therefore required
 - **LANDBACK** is the necessary expression of **Integrity**. It is the only honest response to a history built on stolen land, moving beyond symbolic acknowledgment to material restitution.
 - **Mutual Aid** is the necessary expression of **Equality**. It creates communities of care that dismantle the hierarchies of capitalism and white supremacy, affirming in practice that of God in every person by ensuring their needs are met through solidarity, not charity.
 - **Abolition** is the necessary expression of **Peace**. It is a commitment to dismantle the internal instruments of state violence—the police and prisons that enforce

colonial order—and to build a world where conflict is resolved through justice and healing, not coercion.

A Decolonial Praxis as Quaker Testimony

Confronting this history leads to the work of repair. The decolonial concepts of LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and Abolition are not foreign political ideas, but can be understood as the most authentic modern expressions of core Quaker testimonies.



LANDBACK

as the Testimony of Integrity

Moves beyond apology for historical theft to the only spiritually honest action: restitution. It aligns one's life with the truth of a settler past.



Mutual Aid

as the Testimony of Equality

Builds a "Beloved Community" based on solidarity ("Solidarity, Not Charity"), countering hierarchies and recognizing "that of God" in all.



Abolition

as the Testimony of Peace

Expands the Peace Testimony to reject all forms of state violence, including the carceral systems that enforce colonial property claims.

Decolonial Path for Quakers 2 – Christian colonial capitalist violence

August 20, 2025

Christian colonial capitalist violence

The first step in addressing colonialism is to determine an accurate diagnosis of the problem, which Native people say is **Christian colonial capitalist violence**. Christian refers to the church's blessing to conquer lands not inhabited by Christians, and the ongoing refusal of most Christians to address colonialism today. Capitalism is a fundamentally unjust system of wealth accumulation and economic oppression.

You cannot begin to understand colonialism until you understand and acknowledge this country's history of Christian colonial capitalist violence. I discuss this extensively on this blog, and have combined the posts about my own decolonial journey here: [compiled decolonial journey](#)

Spiritual crisis

The historical record presents my Quaker meeting with a profound spiritual crisis. Our ancestors' settled on the land around Earlham, Iowa. And built the meetinghouse on the land. Subsequent generations either continue living on it, or have sold it. Additionally, Quakers were very involved in the Indian boarding schools and the forced assimilation of Native children into settler culture. Settler-colonialism a fundamental concern we need to deal with because of these past injustices and because it continues to this day.



Bear Creek Friends (Quaker) meeting near Earlham, Iowa

A previous difficult issue

As I prepare to pray, explore and write more about how Quakers can decolonize ourselves, I'm reflecting on previous times I've been led to urge Quakers to join me in other work, specifically my life-long journey to drastically reduce our fossil fuel emissions and the infrastructure they need, like pipelines.

My environmental journey began in 1971 when I moved to Indianapolis, and was horrified by the filthy air, this being before catalytic converters hid the visible exhaust, but didn't stop the fossil fuel emissions. Seeing that triggered a defining spiritual experience, a vision of my beloved Rocky Mountains hidden in smog. At the time, there was no way of knowing how widespread the polluted air would become. I was thinking of this specific photo I had taken of Long's Peak in Rocky Mountain National Park, and developed in my bathroom darkroom.



Long's Peak, Rocky Mountain National Park Jeff Kisling

As a scientist, I was aware of the consequences of increasing atmospheric carbon dioxide levels. I knew the fossil fuel industry's attempts to minimize the consequences were lies, but those lies were accepted by many people, for many years. I knew this could lead to our eventual extinction if we didn't get the emissions under control.

The power of that vision, and the existential threat to Mother Earth, defined my life's work, outside my professional career. I was led to live without a car, which was possible in Indianapolis, if often inconvenient, by walking, running, and public transportation.

The lack of public transportation in rural areas, such as where my Bear Creek Friends meeting is located, makes it really difficult to figure out how to reduce fossil fuel emissions there. Friends do things like combine multiple trips into one, and grow food, which avoids the emissions of transporting goods from many miles away.

How this story evolved illuminates how Quakers respond to challenges, and provides insights on how to deal with decolonizing ourselves.

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

My home Quaker meeting, Bear Creek, is part of the Midwest organization of Quaker meetings, Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative). Conservative refers to preserving spiritual practices, not political orientation. As the name implies, each year the monthly meetings gather for several days for business discussions and social interactions. These meetings are held at Scattergood Friends School and Farm that is under the care of the yearly meeting.

Quakers believe we can continue to receive spiritual guidance throughout our lives. We sometimes refer to the “Inner Light”. This means we are open to change as our understanding unfolds over time.

Our Quaker meetings involve gathering for about an hour together, sitting in silence, as we listen for what the Spirit might be saying to us. This gathering together for shared worship is different from individual meditation.

The meetings aren’t always totally silent, aside from the creaking benches or an occasional cough. Sometimes a Friend is led to share a message by speaking into the silence.

It is this spirituality that is the basis of our justice work.

Faith and Practice

Most yearly meetings have a document about Quaker faith and practice. These practices can vary from yearly meeting to yearly meeting. This is the link to Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)’s Faith and Practice <https://www.iymc.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Faith-and-Practice-with-links.pdf>

Advices and Queries

One of the main ways Quakers continue to explore their spirituality is through the use of advices and queries. There are twelve sets of advices and queries. Common practice is for a monthly meeting to consider one set of queries and advices each month.

These are the topics of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)’s Advices and Queries.

- Meeting for worship
- Outreach
- Meeting for business

- Harmony within the meeting
- Mutual care
- Education
- Home and family
- Personal responsibility
- Civic responsibility
- Environmental responsibility
- Social and economic justice
- Peace and nonviolence

The advice is a statement about the subject being explored, such as environmental responsibility. The queries are a set of questions designed to stimulate prayer and discussion about the subject.

ADVICES AND QUERIES

Quakerism is a living faith made real through the inward light of the living Christ. This faith holds that our individual lives and the corporate life of the Meeting can be guided by continuing revelation through the Holy Spirit. When we behold the splendor of creation, we realize that knowledge of what is divine is beyond description. Traditionally, Friends have referred to the divine in such terms as God, the Inward Light, the Living Water, the Creator, the Christ Within, and the Spirit. Many believe that when we limit the divine to one gender we also limit ourselves and each other. Becoming aware of how we discern Spirit is important to our worship. The Quaker faith is not written in the form of a creed, but is experienced in our lives as a vibrant, living truth. Advices and queries serve to engage our minds and hearts in a process which may provide openings to the leadings of the Spirit within us. These leadings may speak to our individual and corporate needs. The advices and queries reflect experiences from many lives as they contribute to the gathered wisdom of the group. They serve to guide us on our spiritual journeys by opening our hearts and minds to the possibility of new directions and insights.

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) Faith and Practice

Environmental responsibility

10. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

ADVICE

All of creation is divine and interdependent: air, water, soil, and all that lives and grows. Since human beings are part of this fragile and mysterious web, whenever we pollute or neglect the earth we pollute and neglect our own wellsprings. Developing a keen awareness of our role in the universe is essential if we are to live peacefully within creation.

The way we choose to live each day—as we manufacture, package, purchase and recycle goods, use resources, dispose of water, design homes, plan families and travel— affects the present and future of life on the planet. The thought and effort we give to replenishing what we receive from the earth, to keeping informed and promoting beneficial legislation on issues which affect the earth, to envisioning community with environmental conscience, are ways in which we contribute to the ongoing health of the planet we inhabit.

Preserving the quality of life on Earth calls forth all of our spiritual resources. Listening to and heeding the leadings of the Holy Spirit can help us develop qualities which enable us to become more sensitive to all life.

QUERIES

What are we doing about our disproportionate use of the world's resources? Do we see unreasonable exploitation in our relationship with the rest of creation? How can we nurture reverence and respect for life? How can we become more fully aware of our interdependent relationship with the rest of creation? To what extent are we aware of all life and the role we play? What can we do in our own lives and communities to address environmental concerns?

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) Faith and Practice

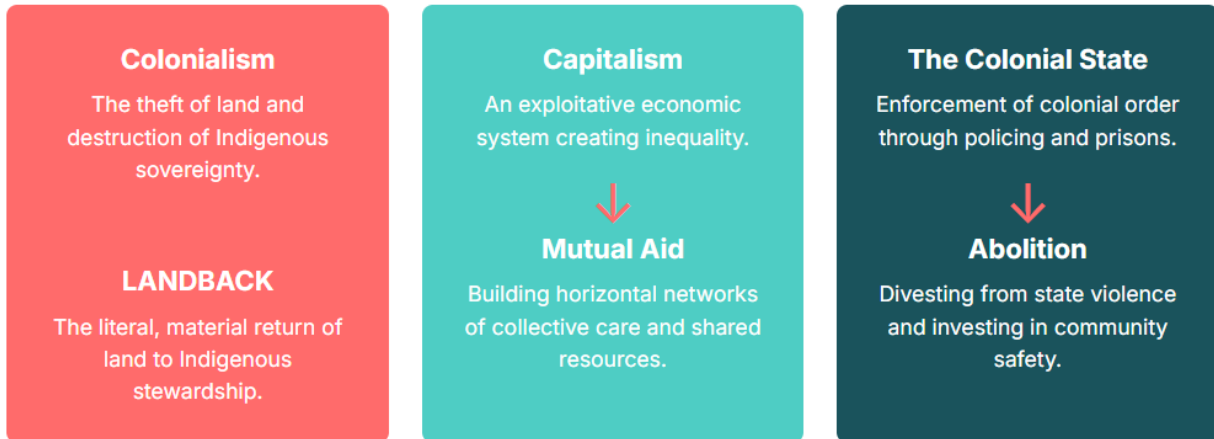
Decolonial repair

An important step in Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)'s decolonial journey could be to bring settler-colonialism into the advices and queries. This revision should explicitly name and reject settler-colonialism as a system of violence

contrary to the Spirit and should include a clear commitment to decolonial repair into the core testimonies of Peace, Equality, and Integrity. This would bring these matters to the spiritual attention of each monthly meeting in an ongoing manner, year after year. In addition, selected pieces from the query responses from the monthly meetings are read during the annual yearly meeting sessions.

A Symmetrical Antidote

Decolonial theory proposes an integrated, three-part praxis to counter the three pillars of Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence.



- **LANDBACK** is the necessary expression of **Integrity**. It is the only honest response to a history built on stolen land, moving beyond symbolic acknowledgment to material restitution.
- **Mutual Aid** is the necessary expression of **Equality**. It creates communities of care that dismantle the hierarchies of capitalism and white supremacy, affirming in practice that of God in every person by ensuring their needs are met through solidarity, not charity.
- **Abolition** is the necessary expression of **Peace**. It is a commitment to dismantle the internal instruments of state violence—the police and prisons that enforce colonial order—and to build a world where conflict is resolved through justice and healing, not coercion.

Urgency

This process of revising the queries would be long term, if done at all.

But Indigenous peoples have to deal with the consequences of settler-colonialism every day, in many ways.



Decolonial Repair Network

Several Iowa Friends and I are involved in the [Decolonial Repair Network](#) that was formed by Eric Anglada and Sikowis Nobiss to provide the space for Friends and allies to work together on decolonization. This would be a great way for more Iowa Friends to engage in decolonial repair. And the funds go to the Great Plains Action Society that Iowa Friends have a long term relationship with.

There are monthly calls to educate ourselves, work on what we can do for decolonization, and for announcements of upcoming events.

Monthly Calls: First Wednesday of the month, 7-8 CT

[Sign Up Here](#)

The Decolonial Repair Network is a network of non-Native individuals, communities and organizations in Iowa, the Midwest, and beyond who strive to be good allies to Indigenous people through actively working to repair the harms of colonization. Our network currently organizes itself through monthly online calls and occasional in-person gatherings.

We understand that the dominant white culture bears the primary responsibility for this immense damage, and therefore we believe that white people bear a particular responsibility to repair the harm. We recognize this truth while welcoming the unique perspective and collaboration of non-Native People of Color and committing to listen to the needs of Indigenous leadership. We understand that the work of repair is not only about healing damage done to Indigenous peoples and the land, but that it is also about healing ourselves.

We ask that those who join this network are willing to make the following commitments:

- Contributing ongoing financial support to [Honor Native Land Fund](#)
- Regularly attending monthly learning and organizing calls on the first Wednesday of each month that will focus on building community, sharing resources, learning Indigenous and colonial history, current issues facing Indigenous communities, engaging guest speakers (both Native and non-Native), healing, and networking
- Willingness to confront racism in all its forms, such as racist mascots and cultural appropriation
- Willingness to work to dismantle legal and cultural systems of white supremacy
- Inner transformation and healing the wounds of colonialism within
- Healing land in whatever places we inhabit

- As able, showing up when Indigenous leaders call for solidarity and support

[Sign Up for the Decolonial Repair Network](#)

Decolonial Path for Quakers 3 – Radical spiritual authority

August 25, 2025

"A Life Lived from a Divine Center"

The core of the IYM(C) faith is the direct experience of the divine, or "Inner Light." This leads to a belief in "continuing revelation"—that understanding unfolds over time. This spiritual architecture provides the tools for self-reflection and change, making a decolonial reckoning not just possible, but a spiritual necessity.

The last post discussed the Quaker use of queries (questions) as one of our primary spiritual practices. Key to the consideration of the use of advices and queries is the fundamental belief of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) Friends that the Spirit is present today, as it has always been and will be. The advices and queries serve to “engage our minds and hearts in a process which may provide openings to the leadings of the Spirit within us.” Our form of worship, expectantly waiting together in silence, is how we listen for the Spirit, seek the Inner Light.

This is my hope and belief, that the continued search for Spiritual guidance will lead us to find ways to address the historical and ongoing injustices of the Christian colonial capitalist violence of this country.

[The Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656](#)

[The earliest foundations of Quaker advices can be traced to 1656 when the elders at Balby, Yorkshire, England](#), issued the first formal collection of spiritual guidance. This foundational epistle contained twenty “advices” that provided detailed directions for Friends’ conduct and established a crucial principle: they were meant as **spiritual guidance** rather than rigid law, **emphasizing the primacy of direct divine revelation over written authority**.

The practice of queries developed later and somewhat separately. Initially, in 1682, London Yearly Meeting began by asking three questions to gather factual information about the status and needs of Friends throughout their quarterly meetings. These early queries served purely

administrative purposes, helping the “meeting for sufferings” (established around 1675) provide relief and mutual aid to persecuted Friends and publicize injustices.

- *Which Friends in service to the Society, in their respective regions, departed this life since the last Yearly Meeting?*
- *Which Friends, imprisoned on account of their testimony, died in prison since the last Yearly Meeting?*
- *How among Friends did Truth advance since last Yearly Meeting and how do they fare in relation to peace and unity?*

History, Quaker Faith and Practice, Britain Yearly Meeting

A Dual Genesis

The practice of Advices and Queries did not begin as a single concept. It emerged from two distinct 17th-century streams—pastoral guidance and administrative inquiry—that gradually merged into a powerful tool for spiritual discernment.

The Origin of Advices

1656

The first formal collection of spiritual guidance was issued by elders at Balby, England. It was explicitly not a "rule or form to walk by," but pastoral counsel to guide Friends by the "measure of light" within them, establishing a non-creedal, Spirit-led foundation.



The Origin of Queries

1682

London Yearly Meeting began asking administrative questions to understand the state of its scattered community. These were practical inquiries about deaths, imprisonments, and the general welfare of local meetings, functioning more like a census.

The 18th-Century Fusion

1791

London Yearly Meeting formally integrated the pastoral Advices with the administrative Queries. This transformed the practice into a unified system for both spiritual discipline and corporate self-examination, holding pastoral care and communal accountability in a dynamic balance.

A significant shift occurred in the early 18th century as Quakers became concerned with preserving the Society and began to be used more to ensure consistency of conduct and to

obtain information about the spiritual state of meetings. This formalization accelerated around the 1760s, with queries being read and answered more frequently to test how well Friends adhered to approved standards. By 1791, London (Britain) Yearly Meeting adopted the first “general advices” for consideration by monthly and quarterly meetings, marking the beginning of the integrated “advices and queries”.

Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

In Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) (IYMC) the consideration of advices and queries is one of our primary spiritual practices. They are intended to bring attention to how we are living our lives. And provoke consideration of ways to build more just societies.

Radical spiritual authority

1877

The Great Separation

The single most defining event for Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) was the 1877 schism. A conflict over revivalist methods versus traditional, silent worship led a group of Friends to separate and form a new body dedicated to conserving the original, Spirit-led practices.

This act was a radical re-assertion that spiritual authority resides in the direct leading of the Spirit, not in programmed services or human leaders. By rejecting a pastoral model, IYMC elevated the importance of corporate discernment, making the Advices and Queries process essential to its identity.

A Living Faith: The Role of Advices & Queries

The Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) uses a spiritual practice called "Advices and Queries" not as a rigid set of rules, but as a living tool for community reflection and growth. This process is built on the core belief in "continuing revelation"—the idea that divine truth is revealed continuously.

The Annual Cycle of Discernment



Once a month my Quaker meeting spends the hour we are together prior to meeting for worship discussing one set of advices and queries. By the end of the year, we have considered all twelve sets of them. The responses are sent to the Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) assistant clerk, who selects excerpts from them to be shared during the yearly gathering of Friends and attenders at Scattergood Friends School and Farm.

Dual purpose

This practice of considering advices and queries serves a dual function: it is the primary mechanism for conserving a traditional, Spirit-led form of Quakerism, while simultaneously acting as the primary engine for a radical re-evaluation of the Yearly Meeting's history and core testimonies.

Examples of responses

Economic practices are very often at the root of social injustices. While there are innumerable examples of inequities and discriminatory practices related to wages, access to housing, education, medical, and other services, we have failed to come to grips with some foundational economic injustices. We live and work on land that was outright stolen from Native Americans.

Our buildings and infrastructure were built with the labor of enslaved African Americans and other people of color, with the resulting extensive benefits and profits going to white males. We will not be able to make progress regarding racial (including indigenous) injustice until we apologize for these wrongs and find ways to redistribute the wealth and resources that were created as a result.

Response to Social and Economic Queries, Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 2018

We benefit from inequality and exploitation because we live easy, comfortable lives while others don't. Colonialism and Capitalism are systems that exploit other people and the Earth for our benefit.

Response to Personal Responsibility Queries, Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 2020

Selected responses to the queries 2003 – 2023

From the published Minute books of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)

All of the selected responses to the queries that were approved over the years where electronic versions of the Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) Minutes were available.

<https://quakersmutualaidandabolition.blog/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/advices-and-queries-with-selected-responses-updated.pdf>

Decolonial Path for Quakers 4 – History of queries

August 27, 2025

"A Life Lived from a Divine Center"

The core of the IYM(C) faith is the direct experience of the divine, or "Inner Light." This leads to a belief in "continuing revelation"—that understanding unfolds over time. This spiritual architecture provides the tools for self-reflection and change, making a decolonial reckoning not just possible, but a spiritual necessity.

I was surprised that continuing research into the use of advices and queries uncovered the following, which indicates Friends worked on their responses to the queries prior to Monthly Meeting. This became a practice for me years ago. Before the days of Zoom, I felt disconnected from my home meeting, Bear Creek, in Iowa. My career was in medical research at Indiana University Medical Center in Indianapolis.

My monthly meeting, Bear Creek, created an added dimension to this several years ago. Several member of the meeting live far from the meetinghouse, but maintain close ties with the meeting by means of email exchanges, telephone calls and by visiting when possible. The meeting decided to strengthen these connections by inviting those who could not be present to send their responses to the meeting ahead of time. Then when that set of queries was being discussed, those responses were read, to add to the discussion, and perhaps parts of which would be included in the written report about that query. We refer to this as "long distance queries", and all involved have found this a meaningful, wonderful practice.

[Advices and Queries, jeffkisling.com, Nov 2, 2017](#)

Lincoln State of the Meeting 2004

We continue our practice of discussing one query each month in a session before meeting for worship. Our answers are shared with our member in the State Penitentiary and he responds to our answers and gives his own answer.

Bear Creek Monthly Meeting State of the Meeting 2014

A special support for our meeting is the interaction with our distant members. There is a flurry of e-mails at Query time. We are together at Midyear Meeting and Yearly Meeting. There is sharing of resources, events, and concerns.

Ames Friends Meeting 2021

Ames Friends Meeting (AFM) has worshiped in a hybrid form for most of the past year, with some of us masking and distancing at our meetinghouse, while others join via video conferencing. The technology for virtual meeting has allowed online visitation and we have felt fortunate to have met Friends from other locations in the US and from other countries. Although we have transitioned primarily to in-person meetings as of early summer, 2021, we are grateful for the gifts of those who have participated virtually. We plan to continue to offer a video conferencing option as we emerge from the pandemic. An additional blessing is the transfer membership of two Friends from the Live Oak Friends Meeting in Houston, Texas.

2/04/1910 *Watering plants, sowing pansy seed, wheeling out manure to the gooseberries, helping Charlie making out answers to the queries for Monthly Meeting tomorrow. Jesse working for Alfred, Gilbert for Father in the morning; P.M. cutting wood, etc. at home. Have felt considerably disturbed at Father's importunity that his wood he wants cutting be done at once to the exclusion of anything else. It has always been a failing with him, but this time he seems to be in a special hurry. From the Journals of Henry Standing, 1892 – 1916*

E X T R A C T S

F R O M T H E

M I N U T E S A N D A D V I C E S

O F T H E

Y E A R L Y M E E T I N G

O F

F R I E N D S

H E L D I N

L O N D O N,

F R O M I T S F I R S T I N S T I T U T I O N .

P R I N T E D B Y J A M E S P H I L L I P S .

M D C C L X X X I I I .

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YEARLY MEETING'S QUERIES.

1. What present prisoners ?
2. How many discharged since last year, when and how ?
3. How many died prisoners ?
4. How many meeting houses built, and what meetings new settled ?
5. How many publick friends died, and when ?
6. What is the state of your meeting ? Is there any growth in the truth ; and doth any convincement appear since last year ; and is love and unity preserved among you ?
7. Do friends, by example and precept, endeavour to train up their children, servants, and those under their care, in all godly conversation, and in frequent reading of the holy scriptures, as also in plainness of speech, behaviour, and apparel ; and are friends faithful in admonishing such as are remiss therein ?
8. Do you bear a faithful and Christian testimony against the receiving or paying tithes, priest's demands, and those called church rates ; and do you admonish such as are unfaithful therein ?

9. Do

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YEARLY MEETING. 269

9. Do you stand clear in our testimony against defrauding the king of his customs, duties, or excise ; or in dealing in goods suspected to be run ?
10. How are the poor among you provided for ; and what care is taken for the education of their offspring ?
11. Do you bear a faithful testimony against bearing arms, paying trophy-money, or being in any manner concerned in the militia, in privateers, letters of marque, or armed vessels, or dealing in prize goods as such ?

N. B. Three queries agreed to 1682 ; eight queries first agreed to 1696.

The queries are mentioned in the South River preparative meeting of women friends held 8th month, 1st, 1878. And in almost every historical document of the minutes of business meetings.

South River preparative
meeting of women friends held
1st mo 1st 1878

those appointed at last meeting
to propose to meet the name of
a friend to serve as clerk propose
the name of Jane Barnett
which being united with she
is appointed to that service

the clerk not being present
Margaret White is appointed clerk
for the day

The queries were all read in this
meeting and answered as queried
after which is directed forwarded
to the monthly meeting

Unfortunately, the queries for the following answers are not known but you get a sense of the responses.

South River Preparative Meeting of Friends

Men's meeting answers August 1, 1878

South River Preparative Meeting of Friends held 8th mo 1st 1878

Those appointed at last meeting to propose to this the name of a friend for clerk propose Nathan Craven, who being united with is appointed to that service.

The queries were all read in this meeting with the following answers thereto which the clerk is directed to sign on behalf of this meeting and forward them to the Monthly Meeting.

- 1st Ans They are
2nd “ Friends and discourage talebearing and detraction and are preserved in a good degree of Christian love.
3rd Ans More care is needed under the several heads of that query.
4th “ No transgressions has [*sic.*] come under notice.
5th “ They do.
-

4

- 6th “ None amongst needing aid that we know of.
7th “ None that we know of.
8th “ Every family of us furnished with a copy of the Holy Scriptures and three parts of families read as queried after.
9th “ None.
10th “ None.
11th “ One whole family, seven parts of families, 14 males, 11 females and one received into membership by request.
12th “ Six males, 2 females in the habitual use.
-

Women's meeting answers August 1, 1878

South River preparative meeting of women friends held 8th mo 1st 1878

Those appointed at last meeting to propose to next the name of a friend for clerk propose Jane Barnett which being united with she is appointed to that service.

The clerk not being present Margaret White is appointed clerk for the day.

The queries were all read in this meeting and answered [*sic.*] as queried after which is directed forwarded [*sic.*] to the monthly meeting.

John and Margaret White requests [*sic.*] that their minor daughter Jane be recorded a member with us.

Reece Mendenhall and Catharine his wife request that their minor son Alfonso be recorded a member with us.

Inferred Content of Queries from Meeting Minutes and Answers (North Branch Monthly Meeting, circa 1877):

The minutes of the North Branch Monthly Meeting's query responses provide insight into the topics covered.

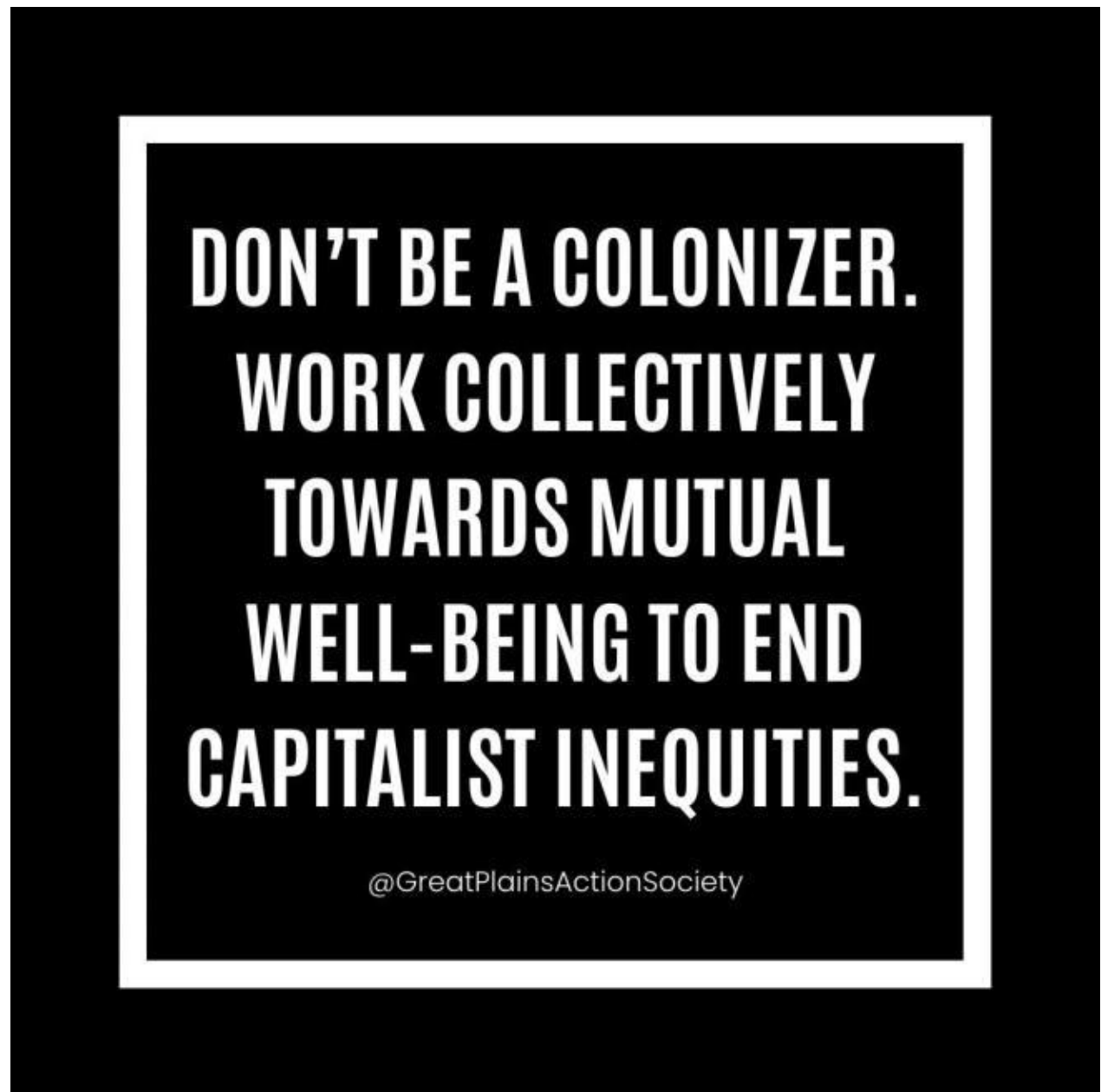
- **Query 1 (implied):** Concerned with the overall state and conduct of members. The answer "They are" suggests a general inquiry into their adherence or well-being.
- **Query 2 (implied):** Addressed "**bearing and detraction**" and the preservation of "**Christian love**" among Friends. The answer states that both are discouraged, and Friends are preserved "in a degree of Christian love".
- **Query 3 (implied):** Focused on the religious education of children and those under Friends' care, specifically regarding **knowledge of the Gospel, discouraging "pernitious reading," and encouraging the reading of "Holy Scriptures."** The answer indicated that Friends endeavored in these areas, though "not as faithfull in these respects as is disserable".
- **Query 4 (implied):** Addressed a topic with "no exceptions to that query" in the answer.
- **Queries 5, 6, 7 (implied):** Received general affirmative answers ("We believe they do," "They are as far as appears," "No complaint under the several heads of that query").
- **Query 8 (implied):** Related to the provision and reading of **Holy Scriptures** within families. The answer noted that "Each family is furnished with a copy of the Holy Scriptures some friends read as queried after".
- **Query 9 (implied):** Answered with "None".
- **Query 10 (implied):** Answered with "None recorded; three within our limits".
- **Query 11 (implied):** A **statistical query** on membership, asking for the number of families, parts of families, and total members (males and females). The response for this meeting was "No of families 20 parts of families 12 members 111 Males 55 Females 56".
- **Query 12 (implied):** Concerned with **temperance**, specifically the "**habitual use of Tobacco**" and involvement in its sale. The answer noted "Ten members in the habitual use of Tobacco 8 males and 2 Females; and 2 engaged in the sale thereof".

[The Epistle from the Elders at Balby, 1656Download](#)

Decolonial Path for Quakers 5 – Don't be a colonizer

August 29, 2025

My experience is that most white Quakers in this country believe colonialism is a thing of the past. Which is the greatest obstacle to creating change. A graphic from the Great Plains Action Society (GPAS) says **“don't be a colonizer.”** The graphic also explains how to do so, by **“working collectively toward mutual well-being to end capitalist inequities.”**



Why change now?

I pray and write a lot about the injustices of Christian colonial capitalist violence. But the greatest argument for decolonization is the horrible shape we and Mother Earth are in after more than five hundred years of living this way in this country. The consequences of the abuse of Mother Earth are just beginning to emerge. We have rapidly fallen into an authoritarian state. Our systems of checks and balances failed. Civil liberties are in tatters. Our colonial violence is felt across the globe. We continue funding the killing of Palestinian children and families.

As the world stumbles toward climate tipping points, a growing body of scientific evidence suggests that among the most powerful defenders of nature are not satellites or carbon markets, but people – Indigenous peoples.

From the rainforests of the Amazon to the boreal forests of Canada, Indigenous stewardship may be one of the most high-impact and cost-effective strategies to mitigate climate change, preserve biodiversity, and disrupt environmental crimes.

Indigenous peoples occupy, use, or manage over a quarter of the Earth's surface, including many of its most ecologically intact regions. These territories often overlap with areas of high carbon density and biodiversity richness.

Where land rights are formally recognized, deforestation rates are consistently [two to three times lower](#) than in surrounding lands. In Brazil, for instance, forests inside demarcated Indigenous territories experience dramatically less forest loss than non-designated lands, a pattern echoed across Peru, Colombia, Mexico, and Canada.

[Indigenous Stewardship Is The Ignored Climate Solution](#) By Robert Muggah, Intercontinental Cry. August 27, 2025

Economic practices are very often at the root of social injustices. While there are innumerable examples of inequities and discriminatory practices related to wages, access to housing, education, medical, and other services, we have failed to come to grips with some foundational economic injustices. We live and work on land that was outright stolen from Native Americans. Our buildings and infrastructure were built with the labor of enslaved African Americans and other people of color, with the resulting extensive benefits and profits going to white males. We

will not be able to make progress regarding racial (including indigenous) injustice until we apologize for these wrongs and find ways to redistribute the wealth and resources that were created as a result.

Response to Social and Economic Queries, Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) 2018

Indigenous Stewardship

Fundamental to decolonization is to center Indigenous voices and leadership.

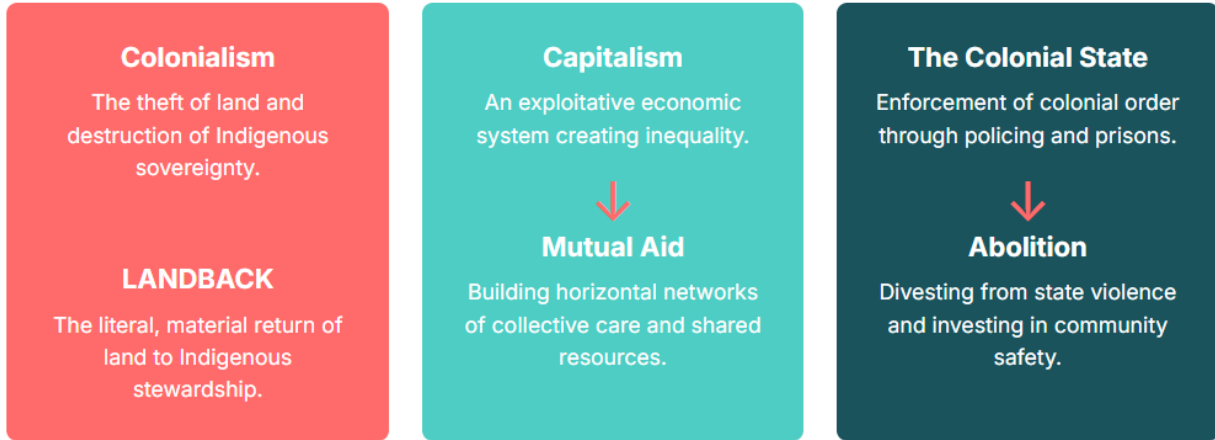
We address the trauma that indigenous peoples and the earth face and work to prevent further Christian colonial capitalist violence by building power in indigenous communities through rematriation, healing justice, and building a regenerative economy.

Indigenous Peoples in the US and around the world have created a culture of resistance, built on the frontlines, that is now a way of life. It can be found in our dancing, singing, clothing, art, and in our political motivations. For instance, the American Indian Movement (A.I.M.) song was created out of the Red Power Movement and is sung at many of our cultural events and in our movement spaces, which are often one and the same. It began with the need to protect our homes and way of life from settler invaders, colonial militias, and imperialist governments. There is over a 500-year history of Indigenous resistance to the violent nature of colonial-capitalist genocidal and extractive practices. As stewards of the land, our ancestors saw right away that settler invaders, who were directly harming us, were also harming the environment and throwing the ecosystem off balance. The resistance is ongoing as long as genocide and colonization are perpetuated by the nation-state and its settler citizens. To be in a constant state of resistance is traumatic, hence why we suffer from intergenerational and historical trauma. Yet, it is necessary to protect our land, our people, and our ways from colonial-capitalist forces.

[Great Plains Action Society's Theory of Change](#), Sikowis Nobiss

A Symmetrical Antidote

Decolonial theory proposes an integrated, three-part praxis to counter the three pillars of Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence.



Decolonial Path for Quakers 6 – Spirit and Testimonies

September 2, 2025

Spirituality is the foundation of my decolonial journey and my appeals to Quakers (Friends) and others to escape from our current colonial nightmare. I was raised in a multi-generational Quaker family and community in rural Iowa. I attended a Quaker boarding high school, Scattergood Friends School and Farm, and a year at a Quaker College (Earlham)-cut short because of my Vietnam War resistance. I had a spiritual experience at Bear Creek meetinghouse when I was about ten years old that has been a source of spiritual guidance, strength and challenge ever since. We don't have good language for expressing spirituality, but that spiritual experience made the continuing presence of the Spirit real to me, then and at other times since.

Testimonies

Quaker testimonies are the outward expression of our faith. The acronym "SPICES" is sometimes used to express the Quaker testimonies of Simplicity, Peace, Integrity, Community, Equality, and Stewardship. There is a common admonition for Quakers to "let our lives speak," for our actions to match our words.

First Spiritual Challenge

My first spiritual challenge was the requirement for males in this country to register with the Selective Service System (the draft) on our eighteenth birthday. Quakers generally believe in peace and nonviolence, but how they choose to express that varies. It was clear to me that I could not participate in the armed forces. The question then became whether I could accept the common Quaker choice to do two years of alternative service as a conscientious objector. The deeper question was what was I willing to risk for my faith and principles? Confrontations with the state have been common throughout Quaker history, particularly in terms of war and peace. The issue of registering for the Selective Service System is related to the testimonies of peace and integrity. I was clear on the peace testimony, but struggling with integrity. Resisting the draft could result in a felony conviction and imprisonment. Lifelong consequences.

Integrity

But it was also very clear there would be lifelong consequences for me if I took what I saw as the easy path of cooperation with the draft as a conscientious objector. I would not have acted with

integrity if I accepted alternative service because I don't believe in participating in war in any way. An Epistle I read at that time, signed by several Quakers I knew, put it well:

Those of us who are joining in this epistle believe that cooperating with the draft, even as a recognized conscientious objector, makes one part of the power which forces our brothers into the military and into war. If we Friends believe that we are special beings and alone deserve to be exempted from war, we find that doing civilian service with conscription or keeping deferments as we pursue our professional careers are acceptable courses of action. But if we Friends really believe that war is wrong, that no man should become the executioner or victim of his brothers, then we will find it impossible to collaborate with the Selective Service System. We will risk being put in prison before we help turn men into murderers.

It matters little what men say they believe when their actions are inconsistent with their words. Thus we Friends may say that all war is wrong, but as long as Friends continue to collaborate in a system that forces men into war, our Peace Testimony will fail to speak to mankind.

[An Epistle to Friends Concerning Military Conscription](#) [Excerpt]

I used similar language in the epistle I wrote about decolonization in [An Epistle to Friends Regarding Community, Mutual Aid and LANDBACK](#)

It has become clear to some of us who are called Friends that the colonial capitalist economic system and white supremacy are contrary to the Spirit and we must find a better way. We conscientiously object to and resist capitalism and white supremacy.

It matters little what people say they believe when their actions are inconsistent with their words. Thus, we Friends may say there should not be hunger and poverty, but as long as Friends continue to collaborate in a system that leaves many without basic necessities and violently enforces white supremacy, our example will fail to speak to mankind.

Let our lives speak for our convictions. Let our lives show that we oppose the capitalist system and white supremacy, and the damages that result. We can engage in efforts, such as Mutual Aid and LANDBACK, to build Beloved community. To reach out to our neighbors to join us.

We must begin by changing our own lives if we hope to make a real testimony for peace and justice.

Note: Modeled from 'An Epistle to Friends Concerning Military Conscription'

[An Epistle to Friends Regarding Community, Mutual Aid and LANDBACK](#) [Excerpt]

The Testimony of a Lived Faith

At the core of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) is the principle to "let our lives speak"—a belief that actions must be a direct testament to one's faith. This faith flows from a central belief in the "Inner Light," an inward experience of the divine that guides individuals and the community.

Inner Light

The direct, personal experience of the divine ("that of God in every one") that enables communion and provides guidance.



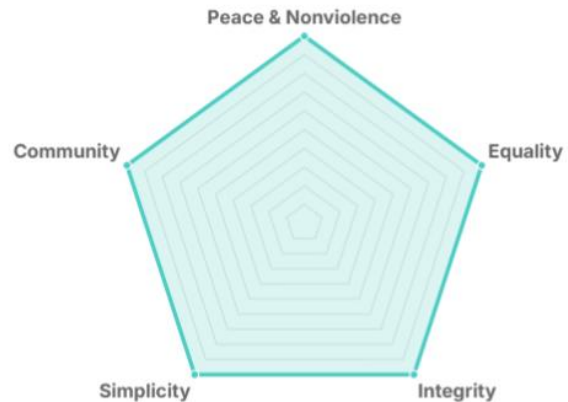
Core Testimonies

The practical, observable fruits of a genuine spiritual life, including Equality, Integrity, Simplicity, and Peace.



"Let Our Lives Speak"

The principle that daily conduct in personal, economic, and civic life must be consistent with these spiritual convictions.



The core testimonies are the pillars that translate inward faith into outward action, forming the foundation of the Quaker identity.

(C)2025 Jeff Kisling

"A Life Lived from a Divine Center"

The core of the IYM(C) faith is the direct experience of the divine, or "Inner Light." This leads to a belief in "continuing revelation"—that understanding unfolds over time. This spiritual architecture provides the tools for self-reflection and change, making a decolonial reckoning not just possible, but a spiritual necessity.



(C)2025 Jeff Kisling Bear Creek Friends Meeting near Earlham, Iowa

Decolonial Path for Quakers 7 – The Paradox

September 3, 2025

Underlying the discussion of Quakers and the settler-colonization of this land is this paradox: **How could a religious community, White European Quakers, be involved in the Christian colonial capitalist violence required to settle/colonize this land, as Native peoples describe it?** A people who profess nonviolence? Who were fleeing religious persecution? A people whose spirituality is based upon the belief that there is that of God or the Spirit in everyone? A people who say the way we live our lives expresses our faith and beliefs?

Responsibility vs guilt

Guilt Guilt is an inward-facing emotion, often focused on personal shame and discomfort. It can lead to paralysis, preventing the very actions needed for healing and repair. It asks, "How do I feel about what happened?" Guilt centers the self, trapping energy in a cycle of shame and inaction rather than directing it toward external repair.	Responsibility Responsibility is an outward-facing commitment, focused on accountability and action. It moves beyond feelings to address the material and spiritual harm done. It asks, "What does repair require of me now?" Responsibility accepts the need for sober reflection but channels the vast majority of energy toward concrete, reparative action.
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When these subjects come up there are often complaints about people today being made to feel **guilty** for past injustices.

First, these injustices are not merely things of the past. **Patterns of erasure and assimilation continue.** This is one of the primary reasons settler-colonialism must be dealt with. Christian colonial capitalist violence persists.

Secondly, the only way to counter the Christian colonial capitalist violence is by **replacing those interlocking systems of injustice with these interlocking systems of justice**, i.e. LANDBACK, Mutual Aid and the abolition of police and prisons.

Responsibility is what is required of us now.

A Symmetrical Antidote

Decolonial theory proposes an integrated, three-part praxis to counter the three pillars of Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence.



(C)2025 Jeff Kisling

Race

Quakers were historically known for their roles in the Underground Railroad, for example, helping enslaved people escape to freedom. And, yet, there were Friends who were involved in chattel slavery. Few African Americans are attracted to Quaker meetings in this country. Unacknowledged White supremacy and racial tensions are common in many Friends meetings even today.

Forced Assimilation

Quakers were also very involved in the federal Indian Boarding Schools policies, and ran about thirty such schools in this country. Significant trauma was, and continues to be passed from generation to generation.

International attention was brought to these institutions when, in 2021, Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation found the remains of around 200 bodies on the grounds of the former Kamloops Indian Residential School in Canada. Since then the grounds of many other such institutions were explored in Canada and the US. The following report from the US Department of Interior, confirmed *"that at least nine hundred seventy three (973) American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian children died while attending Federal Indian boarding schools."*

Such an acknowledgment should include a recognition that the United States operated or supported public-private partnerships with religious institutions and organizations to carry out its policy; that many Indian children suffered physical, sexual, and emotional abuse at these institutions, and that many Indian children died; and that **these harms continue to impact American Indian and Alaska Native individuals and Indian Country.**

[Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative](#). Investigative Report Vol. II, July 2024, Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs, Bryan Newland

The other side of the paradox

So, Quakers aren't exempt from doing harm. But we have the spiritual tools to guide us toward a better world for all. That's why this decolonial journey is so important.

The Foundation: Settler Colonialism's Logic

Settler colonialism isn't just history; it's an ongoing structure that organizes society through a violent triad defined by one thing: land. This system requires the elimination of the Native to acquire land, and the exploitation of the enslaved to make that land profitable.

The Testimony of a Lived Faith

At the core of Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative) is the principle to "let our lives speak"—a belief that actions must be a direct testament to one's faith. This faith flows from a central belief in the "Inner Light," an inward experience of the divine that guides individuals and the community.

Inner Light

The direct, personal experience of the divine ("that of God in every one") that enables communion and provides guidance.



Core Testimonies

The practical, observable fruits of a genuine spiritual life, including Equality, Integrity, Simplicity, and Peace.



"Let Our Lives Speak"

The principle that daily conduct in personal, economic, and civic life must be consistent with these spiritual convictions.



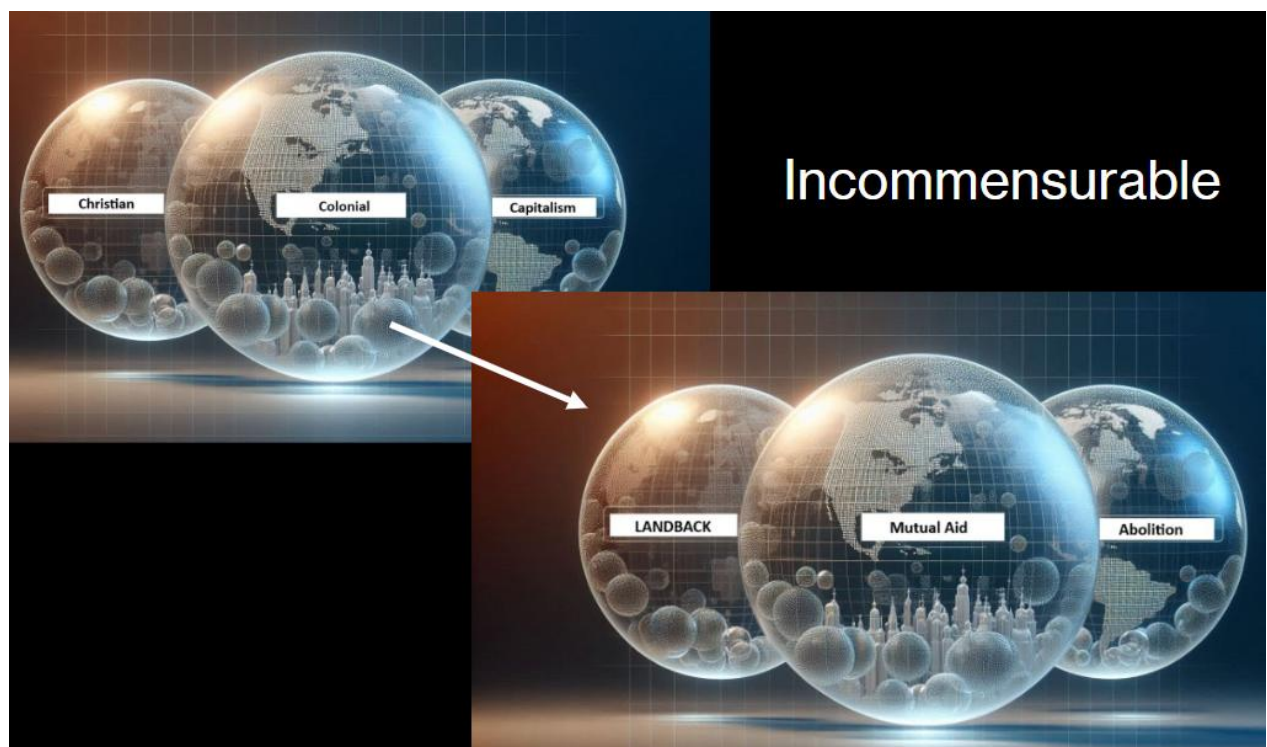
The core testimonies are the pillars that translate inward faith into outward action, forming the foundation of the Quaker identity.

Decolonial Path for Quakers 9 – Asking the right questions

In documenting this decolonial journey I've written about [Quakers' use of questions or queries as a spiritual practice](#). I thought we would need to modify our current queries to bring more attention to the colonial systems we have been living under.

Incommensurable

During this journey I found the use of the term [incommensurable](#) to be a crucial concept. Incommensurable means completely incompatible, or mutually exclusive. In the case of colonialization, our current, interlocking systems of Christian colonial capitalist violence are incommensurable with the decolonial repair mechanisms of LANDBACK, Mutual Aid and Abolition of police and prisons.



(C)2025 Jeff Kisling

Settler Futurity

It became clear that many of our queries make assumptions about the legitimacy and ongoing presence of our current systems of Christian colonial capitalist violence. I recently wrote about **settler futurity**, which is the idea that settler colonialism isn't just about taking land, but also about **controlling the very idea of the future**. It's a way of thinking that presents the settler society as the only possible future—as a permanent and natural reality. A useful concept to push back against as part of our decolonizing work.

Decolonial Witness

IYM(C) Testimony	Traditional Expression	Proposed Decolonial Witness
Integrity	Truthfulness, plain speech	LANDBACK: Material restitution for stolen land and complicity in cultural genocide.
Equality & Community	Mutual care, recognition of “that of God” in all	Mutual Aid: Horizontal solidarity that dismantles charity hierarchies and builds beloved community.
Peace	Refusal of military service, nonviolence	Abolition: Dismantling the systemic violence of the carceral state (police and prisons).

Decolonial Queries

What is needed is a complete spiritual reorientation to systems of decolonial justice, i.e. LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and Abolition. We need to work on advices and queries related to:

- Centering Indigenous Voices
- Truth and Historical Complicity
- LANDBACK and the Testimony of Integrity
- Mutual Aid and the Testimony of Equality
- Abolition and the Peace Testimony
- Systemic blowback in our communities
- Non-collaboration with the State
- ReMatiation and Spiritual Balance
- Incommensurability and the Limits of Reconciliation
- Settler-Native-Slave Triad
- Letting Our Decolonized Lives Speak

Decolonial Path for Quakers 10 – Sensemaking

I recently wrote: ***The question is, do we continue to accept the current dominant systems of colonial capitalist violence?*** I believe we must stop our complacency and complicity in accepting the ongoing injustices of colonization. (from [“This is the question”](#))

While I continue to try to express why I believe we (white Quakers) must confront historic injustices in this country, massive global change is occurring all around us. We seem to be on the brink of a perfect storm of economic, political, environmental and social collapse. The current dominant systems may not dominate much longer in the face of this.

In any country on the cusp of authoritarianism, the role of the press as an engine of scrutiny, truth and accountability becomes increasingly critical.

It feels like we have reached that point in the US.

When elected officials of the opposing party are arrested or handcuffed, when the military is deployed to quell overwhelmingly peaceful protest, when student activists are jailed and deported, and when a wide range of civic institutions – non-profits, law firms, universities, news outlets, the arts, the civil service, scientists – are targeted and penalized by the federal government, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that our core freedoms are disappearing before our eyes – and democracy itself is slipping away.

The Guardian

This multi-system collapse can be traced back to the arrival of European settlers on this land. Indigenous peoples refer to what happened as “Christian colonial capitalist violence.”



Conscientious objection

Some Friends have come to the conclusion that we must “conscientiously object to and resist capitalism and white supremacy” just as we have historically conscientiously objected to military service. To live faithfully requires us to seek and build alternatives that are rooted in our spiritual principles. The antidote includes LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and Abolition. (See below: [An Epistle to Friends Regarding Community, Mutual Aid and LANDBACK](#))

Symmetrical antidote



Great Plains Action Society’s Theory of Change

Midwest Friends have worked with the Great Plains Action Society’s founder, Sikowis Nobiss, in a number of ways. She spoke to us at Iowa Yearly Meeting (Conservative)’s annual sessions in 2017 about building bridges with Native people.

The Great Plains Action Society has an integrated theory of change, that includes **Mutual Aid**, which I was involved in for several years.

Great Plains Action Society addresses the trauma that Indigenous Peoples and the Earth face and work to prevent further christian colonial capitalist violence by fighting for and building power in Indigenous communities through reMatiation, healing justice and a regenerative economy. We believe that Indigenous ideologies and practices are the antithesis of colonial capitalism, and we deploy these tools to fight and build on our vision—tools that are deeply embedded in a culture of resistance.

Great Plains Action Society's Theory of Change, by Sikowis Nobiss



Sensemaking

*Finally, there remains the most existential risk of them all: **our diminishing capacity for collective sensemaking**. Sensemaking is the ability to generate an understanding of the world around us so that we may decide how to respond effectively to it. When this breaks down within the individual, it creates an ineffective human at best and a dangerous one at worst. At the collective level, a loss of sensemaking erodes shared cultural and value structures and renders us incapable of generating the collective wisdom necessary to solve complex societal problems like those described above. **When that happens the centre cannot hold.***

[Pontoon Archipelago or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Collapse](#) By James Allen, originally published by Medium, Resilience, June 18, 2019

Our spiritual calling

I often think about what James Allen wrote about **sensemaking** in 2019. I believe this is our spiritual calling, . To discern what the spirit is saying, to make sense of what is happening, so that we can find how to move forward together in these chaotic times.

Decolonial Path for Quakers 11 – Will we change?

[September 16, 2025](#) ~ [Jeff Kisling](#) ~ [Edit"Decolonial Path for Quakers 11 – Will we change?"](#)

[Note: I've shared my experiences with the draft many times before. But I think that is relevant in a different way when considering decolonization.]

Previously I wrote, ***The question is, do we continue to accept the current dominant systems of colonial capitalist violence?***

The question reflects my history of frustrating experiences in trying to make **change** happen.

Which raises the question of how does change occur? I've often wondered if I was going about it wrong. Who decides what the proposed changes would be? Who has the power to implement change?

If you believe, as I do, in the need for **decolonization**, the question becomes how do you **change** what is currently the **status quo**?

As a Quaker I believe in, and have had spiritual experiences to help guide me. Quakers as a body seek this spiritual guidance during our silent meetings for worship, during our business meetings, and in our daily lives. We believe in "letting our lives speak." There is often tension between some of our beliefs and our actions. I feel this tension strongly when considering the injustices involved in the colonization of this country that I am living in and benefiting from.

I understood the significance of my first moral challenge, which was what to do about registering for the draft (Selective Service System). There were clearly safe choices, such as doing alternative service as a conscientious objector. I was led to believe that cooperating with the system in any way, even as a conscientious objector, was wrong. When I say I was led to believe, that is in reference to spiritual guidance. That process played out over a long period of time. Many Quaker meetings for worship, many discussions with friends and family, much study. The guidance to resist the draft only became stronger with time.

The question becomes how much a person is willing to risk for their convictions. Resisting the draft could result in a felony conviction, which would have life-long consequences.

I was very familiar with how often people would say they didn't think something was right, but it wasn't up to them to do anything about it. Or try to justify their own actions.

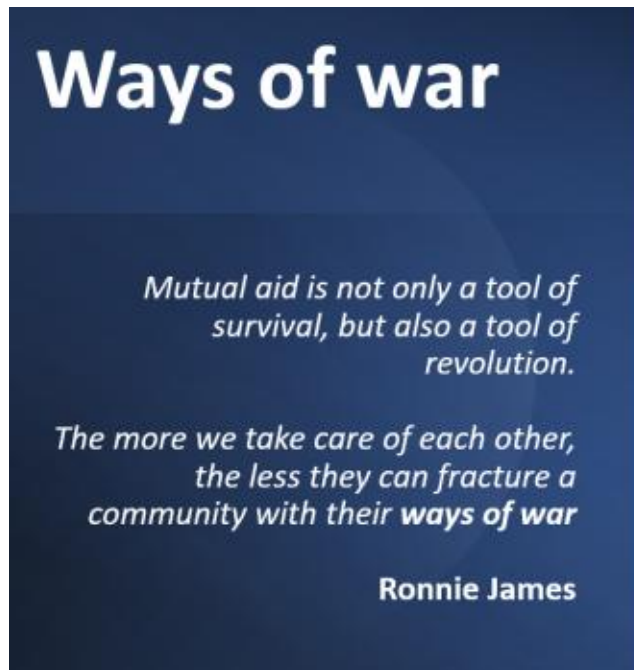
I was at a fork in the road. I could become a conscientious objector and fulfill the requirements for the draft despite my misgivings. Or I could resist and take the chance of imprisonment and a felony conviction.

I don't know if I could have resisted the draft had it not been for the example of a number of Quaker men being imprisoned for their convictions throughout history. Who let their lives speak. My Quaker mentor, Don Laughlin, collected the stories of resistance to war and conscription. My Scattergood Friends School classmate, Daniel Barrett, was convicted for draft resistance. His story and others are in [Young Quaker Men Facing War and Conscription.](#)

Decolonization

Will we change? First, you have to believe something needs to change. This website and my other writings have focused on my views about settle-colonialism and the need for change for some time. I have learned, from my Native friends, to see the Christian colonial capitalist violence of this country's history and current state.

Fortunately, I've also been blessed to witness and engage in how we decolonize ourselves. For several years I was involved with Des Moines Mutual Aid, so I know how powerful **mutual aid** is. Both as a tool for organizing and as a way to meet essential needs. It was some time before I realized Des Moines Mutual Aid is supported by the Great Plains Action Society (as I described in the previous post).



(C)2025 Jeff Kisling My friend Ronnie James

There are a number of efforts now related to **LANDBACK**, which involves not only returning land, but also Indigenous stewardship of the land. I'm happy to report that the Great Plains Action Society is building a community hub in downtown Iowa City. [Indigenous-led Great Plains Action Society plans community hub in Iowa City](#). Nonprofit looks to add urban garden, kitchens and office space by Megan Woolard Megan Woolard, The Gazette, Sept 11, 2025

A research application I use creates numerous ways to present data. The following discussion guide was created from this blog post.

PDF link: [Discussion Guide Will we change.pdf](#)

Discussion Guide: “Will We Change?”

Discussion Guide based on Jeff Kisling’s blog post [Decolonial Path for Quakers 11 – Will we change?](#). This guide is designed to help Quaker communities or other spiritually grounded groups reflect on the themes of decolonization, environmental witness, and systemic change.

Discussion Guide: “Will We Change?”

Purpose

To explore how Quaker values intersect with decolonial practice, environmental justice, and resistance to oppressive systems—and to ask ourselves what meaningful change looks like today.

Opening Reflection

Begin with a moment of silence or a short reading from Quaker tradition or Indigenous voices.

Invite participants to center themselves and reflect on the question:

“What does spiritual courage look like in the face of injustice?”

Key Themes & Queries

1. Spiritual Resistance

- Jeff Kisling shares his experience as a draft resister in 1969.

Query: How do we discern when spiritual conviction calls for civil disobedience?

Prompt: Share examples from your life or community where faith led to resistance.

2. Environmental Witness

- Kisling gave up owning a car in response to environmental degradation.

Query: What sacrifices are we willing to make for ecological integrity?

Prompt: What does “living your testimony” look like in the climate crisis?

3. Truth-Telling About History

- The post confronts Quaker involvement in Indian Boarding Schools.

Query: How do we reckon with our complicity in colonial systems?

Prompt: What steps can we take toward repair and accountability?

4. Power, Money, and Systemic Collapse

- Kissing critiques capitalist structures and the rise of authoritarianism.

Query: How do we challenge systems that prioritize profit over people?

Prompt: What role can Quaker communities play in building alternatives?

Action & Commitment

Invite participants to reflect on:

- One personal change they feel led to make.
- One collective action the group could take (e.g., supporting LANDBACK, mutual aid, or abolitionist organizing).

Suggested Resources

- [Quaker Spirituality and Decolonial Repair](#)
- [Queries on Reconciliation](#)
- [A Path Forward: Deepening the Spiritual Witness](file:///C:/Users/jakis/OneDrive/Documents/1%20NotebookLM/Decolonial%20Journey/Let%20our%20lives%20speak/A%20Path%20Forward_%20Deepening%20the%20Spiritual%20Witness%20of%20Iowa%20Yearly%20Meeting%20(Conservative)%20Through%20Decolonial%20Repair.pdf)

Closing Circle

End with each person sharing one insight or question they're taking with them. Optionally, close with a moment of silence or a blessing from Indigenous tradition (with permission and respect).

Decolonial Path for Quakers 12 – Our other colonial projects

October 8, 2025

I was ignorant about the settler-colonization of this land until about ten years ago, when I first met some Indigenous people. I quickly saw the terrible impact that the Indian boarding school policies had, and continue to have on Native people today. Trauma that is carried from generation to generation. Trauma from policies of **forced assimilation**, which Quakers were involved in. Making friends with Native people and learning about the involvement of Quaker ancestors in forced assimilation and land theft makes this personal for me.

Several points in that paragraph include:

- My belief is that most Quakers in this country were as ignorant as I was about the colonization of this land by European settlers, the ancestors of White Quakers today.
- The discovery of bodies on the sites of many Indian residential institutions of forced assimilation here and in Canada shocked the world and brought international, including Quaker, attention.
- Non Native people cannot understand the depths of the trauma in Indigenous nations and communities, and that this trauma continues today.
- I would not have learned the things I discuss here had it not been for the guidance of the Spirit and the depth of knowledge I gained from Native people.
- This guidance and learning took place over a decade, a lot of time.
- I have always tried to be careful about interactions with Native friends. I attend all the Indigenous events I can. These are educational opportunities for allies.
- I would urge you, though, to learn all you can from your own research.
- I strongly urge you to not make direct contact with Native people, who are still experiencing these traumas. Instead, find Indigenous led public ceremonies, and find allies and organizations near you to begin to make connections with.

It is disheartening, but tragically common, that the efforts by Quakers and others, which were intended to help, instead inflict harm. That's what happens when those who are supposed to be helped are not involved in the planning and implementation of justice work. A key part of **mutual aid**, a decolonial concept, is to involve everyone in the work for justice and survival.

Settler-colonialism

But there has been little broader discussion in these conversations about other Quaker colonial projects. The very acts of acquiescing to **settler-colonialism**, by accepting colonial definitions of what property (land) is, and who has control, or ownership of it, are what wealth is based upon. And wealth determines one's standard of living and access to services. Acquiring wealth is the primary goal of capitalism. Isn't that sad? But capitalism's consequences are devastating and deadly for those who are forced to live at lower socioeconomic levels. All of Mother Earth suffers from the outrageous consumption of fossil fuels by this country.

Learning more about my own ancestors' settlement in the area where my Quaker meetinghouse sits today makes this personal. The concept of LANDBACK is about all of this, not just the return of the land.

Settler Futurity

Part of my education has included learning new terms, like **settler futurity**. Settler futurity is the idea that settler colonialism isn't just about taking land in the present, but also about controlling the very idea of the future. It's a way of thinking that presents the settler society as the only possible future—as a permanent and natural reality. (See: [*Decolonial Journey 18 – Settler Futurity*](#)). I had fallen into this trap. Learning about history and concepts such as settler futurity is a necessary first step in a person's decolonial journey.

Prison Reform

Another Quaker colonial project was the intention of improving the awful conditions of prisons. When Quakerism began in mid-seventeenth-century England, nearly 15,000 Quakers were imprisoned, mainly with charges of not participating in the Church of England and for refusing to

swear oaths. Many Quakers came to this land to flee such religious persecution. But the persecution followed them here.

The **militarism of policing** has exploded to the point of armies carrying out unauthorized arrests by unidentified, militarized enforcement agents on the streets. There is little respect for civil rights and liberties, and the system of checks and balances of the federal and other levels of government is not working. The number of incarcerated people was increasing dramatically even before the current ICE raids.

How can we believe in a historical testimony of for peace, against violence and war, and do nothing about soldiers and tanks on our streets?

U.S.-led wars and conflicts continue as part of this country's global colonial efforts. The US military is one of the largest producers of global fossil fuel emissions.

US administrations have pressured allies to **increase their military spending**. And the US continues to massively supply weapons of war for the relentless atrocities of genocide in Gaza and the West Bank. Authoritarian rule has ascended rapidly. At the same time, social safety nets and services, environmental protections, and peacekeeping efforts are being slashed or eliminated.

Environmental chaos

The relentless growth of capitalism feeds the **existential threat of environmental chaos**. The data centers related to the growth of artificial intelligence consume vast quantities of energy and water.

Sensemaking


I often think of this quote by James Allen, especially these days. Does the world make sense to you? As economic and political systems collapse around us, isn't this time for Quakers to speak


out? Isn't this the time to replace unjust systems with those that serve justice, i.e., LANDBACK, Mutual Aid, and the abolition of police and prisons?

*Finally, there remains the most existential risk of them all: our diminishing capacity for collective sensemaking. Sensemaking is the ability to generate an understanding of world around us so that we may decide how to respond effectively to it. When this breaks down within the individual, it creates an ineffective human at best and a dangerous one at worst. At the collective level, a loss of sensemaking erodes shared cultural and value structures and renders us incapable of generating the collective wisdom necessary to solve complex societal problems like those described above. **When that happens the centre cannot hold.***

[Pontoon Archipelago or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love Collapse](#) By James Allen, originally published by Medium, Resilience, June 18, 2019


Professed Values


 **Peace Testimony:** A core belief in non-violence and trusting in God alone.


 **Inner Light:** Recognizing the divine in every person.

 **Economic Justice:** A stated commitment to fairness and equity.

Historical Complicity

 **30+ Boarding Schools:** Managed institutions designed for cultural genocide.

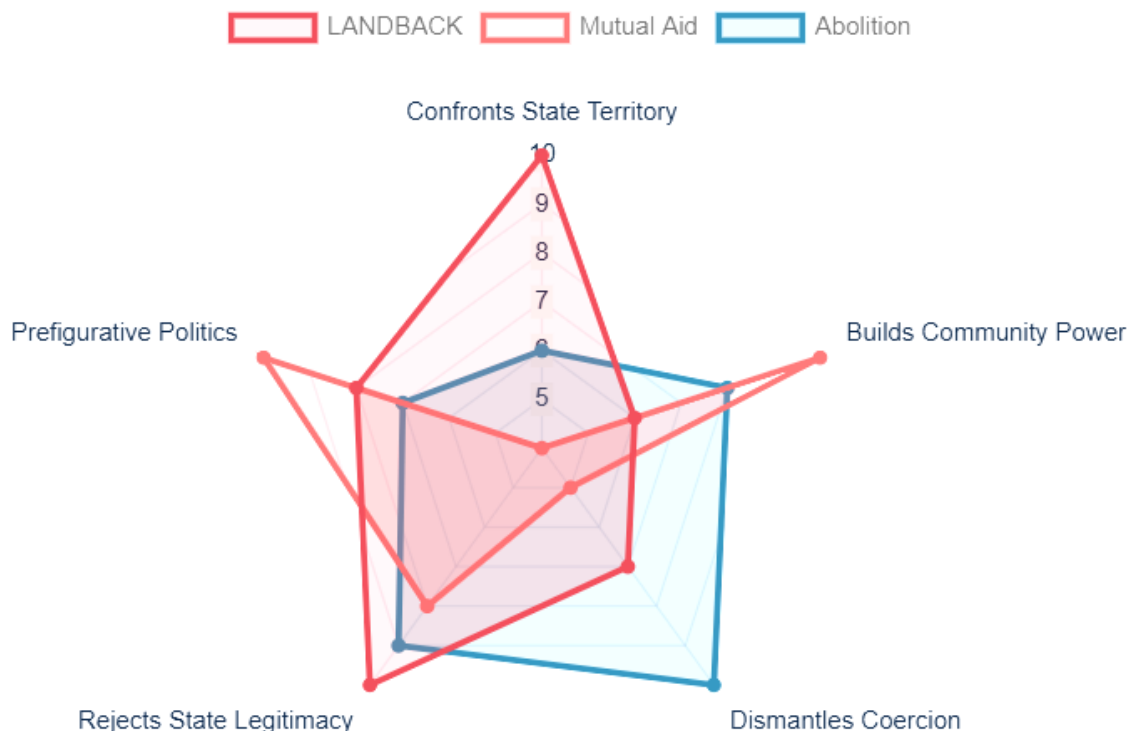
 **Assimilation Policy:** Actively participated in efforts to "civilize" and erase Indigenous identity.

 **Settlement on Stolen Land:** Benefitted directly from the dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

The Foundation: Settler Colonialism's Logic

Settler colonialism isn't just history; it's an ongoing structure that organizes society through a violent triad defined by one thing: land. This system requires the elimination of the Native to acquire land, and the exploitation of the enslaved to make that land profitable.

A Comparative Framework



This radar chart compares the three decolonial methods across key metrics. While all are highly antagonistic to the state, LANDBACK most directly confronts its territorial basis. Mutual Aid excels in building autonomous community power, and Abolition focuses on dismantling the state's coercive force. Together, they form a comprehensive challenge to the colonial order.

We have met the enemy and he is us

As is usually the case, the more deeply I explore a subject, the greater the breadth and depth of the injustices are revealed. This is especially challenging when you come to realize you, as a White person, are the root of the problem.

Paradigm Shift

Decolonization requires a **paradigm shift** in the White worldview and how that continues to be practiced in this land. And practiced globally, most appallingly by the US/Israeli colonial genocide against those in Gaza and the West Bank.

We have met the enemy and he is us.

Walt Kelly, Pogo

Decolonization requires that White people, such as I, **unlearn** what we have been taught about the colonial history of this land and globally. We are taught only the colonizer's view (understatement).

One key to maintaining control in colonized societies is the concept of [settler futurity](#). *At its core, settler futurity is the idea that settler colonialism isn't just about taking land in the present, but also about controlling the very idea of the future. It's a way of thinking that presents the settler society as the only possible future—as a permanent and natural reality.* (See: [Decolonial journey 18-Settler futurity](#))

I invite you to pause and try to imagine a different path through the future, a path of justice. Not a continuation of the current, ugly state of politics and economics of this land today.

White people, White Friends, need to be truly open to the Spirit, open to a paradigm shift of consciousness. Especially in these dark and uncertain times. Whatever path forward is revealed by the Spirit, it will not be a continuation of Christian, colonial, capitalist violence.

I need to confront the concept of 'Whiteness' from the beginning of this journey. From the time white settlers first arrived in this land, they brought with them their culture of supremacy and dominance over the original people. Supported by the Doctrine of Discovery, in which the Church blessed the theft of Indigenous lands. Colonialism is embedded in White society in this country. **White people, including myself, must start our decolonial journey here.** You cannot work for decolonization until you deal with your Whiteness.

from the first post I wrote on this website, [Decolonial Journey 1 – Decolonize myself](#)

A Symmetrical Antidote

Decolonial theory proposes an integrated, three-part praxis to counter the three pillars of Christian Colonial Capitalist Violence.



(C)2025 Jeff Kisling

We need to understand and teach how the three systems of colonization: Christian (state), colonial, and capitalist violence are interlinked, supporting each other. Papal decrees from the 1400s were meant to justify the Christian settlers' taking the land from non-Christians. Displacing Indigenous peoples from their lands is the point of settler-colonialism, and that was carried out ruthlessly in this country. Capitalism is the economic framework that facilitates the transfer of wealth to the wealthy. The state is currently dramatically escalating its crackdown on any activity threatening these interlocking concepts and mechanisms of control in the US today.

This is an unexpected opportunity to build a more just and hopeful society. To be continued...

The first Christian missionaries who proselytized among the Ojibwe in the 17th century found the people willing to listen to priests talk of Jesus and the Bible. In their dispatches home, however, the missionaries complained that the Ojibwe spent far too much time in idle visiting, leaving productive tasks undone.

*Although unrecognized and appreciated by the missionaries, the Ojibwe were engaged in important work. **These spans of unstructured shared time allowed people to engage spiritually and grow to understand needs and formulate paths forward.** Ojibwe know and value the power of visiting. **Unencumbered by agenda points and outcomes, we trust that through prayer and community that we can determine how to honor and care for the environment, each other, and ourselves.***

So during the month of the Freezing Over Moon, why not spend time visiting with others especially those whose ethnicity and social class differs from your own? Eat, drink coffee, let silence fall, and wait to find out what needs to be done. At first, it might be just about being human together; decolonization needs these roots to begin.

[This November, Try Something New: Decolonize Your Mind](#) by Mary Annette Pember, Yes! Nov 13, 2017

SET CONFLICT RESOLUTION GROUND RULES:

Recognize whose lands these are on which we stand.

Ask the deer, turtle, and the crane.

Make sure the spirits of these lands are respected and treated with goodwill.

The land is a being who remembers everything.

You will have to answer to your children, and their children, and theirs—

The red shimmer of remembering will compel you up the night to walk the perimeter of truth for understanding.

As I brushed my hair over the hotel sink to get ready I heard:

By listening we will understand who we are in this holy realm of words.

Do not parade, pleased with yourself.

You must speak in the language of justice.

Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings, Joy Harjo