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# Critique of Glenn on Settler Colonialism and Bonilla-Silva on Critical Race Analysis from Indigenous Perspectives

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## Abstract

I critique Glenn's article on settler colonialism and Bonilla-Silva's article on critical race analysis from Indigenous perspectives, including racial genocide and world-systems analysis, to cover five centuries of global systemic racism during the conquest of the Americas, by Spanish and English colonizers and United States imperialism. I also propose macro-structural, comparative-historical analysis of racism including the destruction, resistance, and revitalization of Native Nations and American Indians.

## Keywords

Indigenous, colonialism, racism, political economy, Indians, critical analysis

## INTRODUCTION

While it is important to observe critical contributions of Evelyn Nakano Glenn's (2015) article with emphasis on settler colonialism and Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's (2015) article emphasizing critical race theory, within the inaugural issue of *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity*, it is also important to use their work as a theoretical moment to evaluate limitations of existing theory and suggest how to expand analyses toward macro-construction of race and systemic racism in the *longue durée* of the modern world-system, from Indigenous studies perspectives. This expansion must identify colonizers and states as perpetrators of genocidal conquest, and Native Nations (not racialized Indians) as resisting invasion and domination, decolonizing and revitalizing Indigenous cultures in opposition to neoliberal modernisms. I address each article in turn, with concluding remarks.

## Response to Evelyn Nakano Glenn

First I respond to "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S.

Race and Gender Formation" by Evelyn Nakano Glenn (2015:52–72).

Native American and Indigenous studies scholars have focused on settler colonialism and decolonization for decades. However, such scholars have distanced this analysis from studying systemic racism and seeing race, so much that the two fields of study have not usefully connected (Robertson 2015; Cook-Lynn 1997), with recent scholars challenging acceptance of settler-colonialism discourses as "recognition" by the capitalist modernity on which they were founded (Coulthard 2014). One key problem is the failure of many race scholars to include genocide of Indigenous peoples as formative in the analysis, with historical structures as part of modernity. Glenn observes problems in

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trying to describe processes using modernity terms that obfuscate the analysis, since “liberal inclusion can only be made by working within the narratives, logics, and epistemologies of modernism. Yet, these are the very narratives, logics, and epistemologies that undergird settler colonial projects. . . . Mignolo and Maldonado-Torres argue for the necessity of challenging and rejecting modernist concepts” (p. 53). Herein, Coulthard’s “resurgent” Indigenous alternatives (p. 173) opposing settler states and capitalism provide that challenge.

For instance, Glenn quotes Elliott and others about diminishing settler fears of “Indian attack” (p. 56) that have been effectively critiqued as biased toward the dominant groups, who are actually invaders, while Indian Nations and other Indigenous peoples are defending their homeland territories in ways that are not linked to the larger racial construct of “Indians.” In decolonization studies, defending Indigenous nations are viewed as protecting their peoples, societies, and especially families (Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird 2012).

Observing early instances of these relationships with Indigenous gender constructions, toward patriarchal systems layered over North American geographies, we see intersectional conquest ideologies. One of the first resistance movements to European invasion, the conquest of Ayiti or La Isla Española (Latinized to Hispaniola), was led by the woman cacique Anacaona. The Spanish negotiators to a treaty conference killed all those who came to the meeting, later executing primary leaders by firing squad, except Anacaona, who refused sexual concubinage and was thus hanged in 1503. A couple of decades later her nephew Guarocuya (Enriquillo) led the last Indigenous revolt after his wife was publicly raped. In both of these instances sexist domination was an essential feature of conquest (as it would be later, with DeSoto and Lady of Cofitachequi, Malinche and Hernán Cortés, and other examples). The Taino-Arawak were decimated to a few thousand by 1542, among the most complete genocides of world history. Therefore, there were no Indigenous peoples to confer over their oral histories, leading to European-dominant discourse that was self-serving, patriarchal, and eliminationist in its historical renderings.

We need to identify the participation of settlers and different types of settler-colonialism, which Glenn notes in the English versus Spanish and French modes of settler colonialism in her analysis (p. 55), primarily because English systems brought women and children as migrant settlers, whereas male-dominant Spanish immigrations caused more

miscegenation. Indigenous studies views this as depending on the religious type of the invading state, whether a Catholic (Spanish) system leading to missions, or a Protestant (English) system leading to genocidal elimination of Native Nations. Catholic racial systems became fluid while Protestant systems hardened, with marked difference in Anglo-American racist constructions, of blood fractions for Indians, hypo-descent for Blacks, and purity for Anglos/Christians/Whites. Glenn notes passive settler constructions, as in the seventeenth century when “hostilities broke out” (p. 56), or in the nineteenth century Wounded Knee “death of 300 Sioux warriors” who were mostly surrendered Lakota families, or in the twentieth-century bureaucracies and boarding schools “intent was to assimilate” (p. 57) that do not identify the designing state as perpetrator. The next step is to identify time periods and social constructions for “racisms” arising within racial (racist) formations, noting the different state colonizing forms toward Indigenous peoples.

Equally important, we need to observe the fact that Columbus brought settlers with his invasion force over to Hispaniola on his second voyage in 1493, enslaving the Taino through the *Repartiniento* state policies. Population limits from origin countries and territorial imperatives circumscribed Spanish and later French invasive settler colonialism from building family-based communities, creating intermediary racial constructions, including mestizo in Mexico and in Latin America, and later the Metis in Canada, French Cajun in Louisiana, and more complicated Caribbean Creole. These racisms subordinated Indigenous peoples, especially in Mexico (Bonfil Batalla 1996), developed by their respective states.

Although more encompassing in considering critical race theory, genocide or culturicide analysis more fully develops the conquest and settler colonialism that envelope and completely alter the sociopolitical and racial geographies of North America. Actually, the conquest of the Americas starts in genocide, a holocaust of Hispaniola with first-race-based slavery of Indians and then Blacks. When armed colonial conquests penetrated the Caribbean, North America, and Florida, they nearly all engaged in genocidal warfare. Similarly the English established beachheads at Jamestown and Plymouth that moved to genocidal warfare as soon as it was practical. Settler colonizing patterns emerged only after there was sufficient land-base to launch invasions and were one of many strategic and tactical methods of taking over land and

territory, sometimes preceding and at other times following genocide. These colonizing racisms can and often co-occur, as in California, where “democratic” settler-militias engaged in genocide after state incorporation (Lindsay 2012). Relying on settler-colonial frames can lead to denial of genocide as racism and has two problems—settler frames obfuscate racial genocides against Indigenous peoples and do not identify the European colonizers and the American racist state as the perpetrator of wars to soften resistance in preparation of colonization of Native Nations (d’Errico 2015). These are problems that Bonilla-Silva’s article shares.

### *Response to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva*

Next, I turn to “More than Prejudice: Restatement, Reflections, and New Directions in Critical Race Theory” by Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2015:73–87).

The political economy of racist systems is history and still in formation is absolutely essential to understanding the social construction of race in a “New World” colonized by Old European countries, leading to mercantile, industrial, and neoliberal (global) capitalism of both worlds. Indigenous societies exemplify diametrically opposed philosophies of development and of social justice as Williams (2012) notes in naming the Western powers having “savage anxiety” even as these colonizing countries call conquest civilization, discounting Indigenous peoples as “tribes” without governing social structures. Tribalism is applied to all interactions and conflicts, inferiorizing the peoples conquered and enslaved as Natives needing the civilizing influence of Christians. These racism rationalizations made their way back to Europe and were extended as prejudice toward African-descent people, setting up market slave systems that did underwrite transatlantic “exchange” of labor and land profits as the underpinnings of capitalism. This, when combined with genocide, is more state formulaic than racial formation, applied to specific Native Nations in clearly defined regions and in wars of extermination.

As Bonilla-Silva states, observing that theories of race and racism placed in terms of “prejudice” are focused on individual and small-group processes that do not give weight to structural discrimination and systemic racism undermines analysis of race, especially over time. This proves especially important in creating stereotypes such as the “savage” or “hostile” Indian, that deny humanization and citizenship in Native Nations or Indigenous

communities, especially when resisting invasive Euro-American peoples with racist typologies. Nearly all Native studies in North America are structured around political issues of sovereignty, firmly written into laws and treaties of the United States, then dissolved or diluted into notions of individual prejudice or particular agency of some leader. The true relationship is both U.S. constitutional and found in Supreme Court decisions, that of nation-to-nation sovereignty recognizing Indian Nations, for example, the Marshall Trilogy (Deloria and Wilkins 1999).

Civilizational constructs with deep prejudice against the tribal and unsophisticated non-Christian native are the root icon of Red devils and Black brutes, disassociated from society and religious responsibility. By theorizing “deep whiteness” connected to color-blindness as the dominant modality of the new racism, Bonilla-Silva does infer triadic root racist icons in the Western mind—native Red man, African Black, and civilized White—as it relates to an American psyche struggling with deep notions of the Savage (popularly represented in American Sniper), versus civilized “settlers” that are really a “white racial frame” (Feagin 2013). However, the two critical issues that Bonilla-Silva identifies as critical toward advancing a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of racial construction and racist systems—delineating “beginning” points of race and racism and identifying ideologies that underscore and reproduce racist systems—fall short in not observing the initiating conquests over Native Nations within the modern world-system, along with the ideologies of the enemy icon and uncivilized savage.

Bonilla-Silva asks us to go back to the beginnings, and like my response to Glenn, that means Ayiti (Hispaniola, San Domingue, Haiti). When Columbus returns from his first voyage, with only two ships as one foundered off Cap Haitienne, where Taino leaders offered assistance saving his crew, he reports lands where the local peoples were generous and guileless to a fault, having gold and other valuable physical artifacts, and who could be conquered with little effort. Catholic hierarchies prepared a Caribbean invasion force, with horse soldiers, steel weapons, settlers, and attack dogs. More importantly, the Vatican issued a set of Papal Bulls establishing great racial constructs of savage Indians, with ideological tools to conquer by bringing Christian religion to the pagan indigenes, policies known as the Doctrine of Discovery (Newcomb 2008), giving European princes rights to conquest, and making Columbus admiral of the ocean seas.

The conquest of Ayiti created the world's first great racial genocide, 3 to 5 million people on Hispaniola alone, with the highest recorded depopulation rates in world history, 97 to 99 percent within three decades. Native Nations were destroyed so their peoples could be enslaved for resource extraction and to work on plantations, which fueled wealth production for colonialists and their home countries. Peoples from Africa were ripped from societies and turned into Black slaves, without any recourse to return to their homelands or cultures. The ideological production of savage Indians and Blacks spread throughout the Caribbean and was the basis for a warped English system to develop similar racial constructs, separating the Indian as peoples who had to be eliminated in order to build a new civilization.

Although great urban centers such as Tenochtitlan in Mexico or political confederacies such as the Five Nations of the *Haudenosaunee* preexisted the European incursions, they could be and were destroyed in the name of Western civilization. It is that civilizational discourse and its fellow traveler ideologies that give rise to modernity, in constant philosophic controversy on the rights and social position of Indians, Blacks, and other non-Christian races. While the profits from enslaved peoples, indentured laborers, or Indians exploited under an *encomienda* system over both land and labor proved irresistible to new master race dominants, the Catholic religion struggled with developing a purely racial rationalization. The mission system developed and utilized the Catholic Christian ideologies, argued over in debates at Valladolid and elsewhere, allowed that Indians had souls and therefore rights to conversion and to treatment as humans, albeit as not fully civilized, which was extended to the lower *mestizaje*. This modernity created Mission Indians in California, denied their national origins, native language, socioeconomic systems, and religious understandings, ultimately leading to erasure from their Indigenous lands. Some analysts see these systems as genocidal (Costo and Costo 1987), while others observe racial (Indian) and ethnonational culturicide from Indigenous perspectives (Fenelon and Trafzer 2014), with the state's creating colonizing racial frames.

Protestants had developed much more effective and destructive religious rationalizations for racial domination, ranging from economic profits from slave trading and plantation systems to clear genocide for the purposes of taking lands and erasing Indigenous sovereignty. Calvinism produced religious doctrines of "the elect" predestination of

some peoples to be saved as Christians, while others would be damned, allowing greater leeway in treating savage Indians. The Protestant Reformation reversed profiteering and separated financing for their great trading companies from state structures, creating legal formulas for corporations to conduct slave-trading and plantation systems, along with operations of genocide, without rigid religious or political rationalization, preparing the ground for capitalism. California represents these relations nearly perfectly, although these ideologies of deep racism were also found in New England genocides as well. When California became a state, the government launched "extermination" campaigns that legalized settler-militias in taking land and killing Indians (Fenelon and Trafzer 2014). Protestant religious rationales of God-given Manifest Destiny (combining Catholic Discovery, Calvinist predestination, and state-supported militias) took the genocidal Mission system to outright genocide, eliminating California Indians at greater than 95 percent depopulation rates.

Another illustrative expansion is the so-called Louisiana Purchase, which included vast territories that no European power had traversed, with many Indian Nations unknown to the French or Americans, without any negotiations whatsoever with the dozens of Native peoples who had lived in the region for thousands of years. Settler colonialism only gradually penetrates these territories as military and trade expeditions create markets, establishing forts and outposts. Moreover, these new forces in the region impose their cultural and societal values to the extent that Native women all but disappear, even when instrumental to historicity, such as Sakakawea—Lewis and Clark refer to her as "squar" and mistake her tribal origins and diplomatic training because of a simple linguistic error, forever distorting history and knowledge of Native peoples (Fenelon and Defender-Wilson 2004).

Similar to the genocidal discourse that all but eliminates the great Taino leader Anacaona in history, refusing to recognize oral traditions as roughly equivalent to written histories leads to cross-societal distortions and ideological biases, such as Sakakawea's mistaken tribal origins, the Louisiana "Purchase" (can one buy or sell peoples you have never met?) and the Discovery doctrine inherent in Lewis and Clark (Native societies exist only when discovered), and more potently the Columbus myth. This then feeds into civilizational discourse of settler colonialism, and of racialized "savages" then called Indians, suggesting only the written history by Euro-Americans matters and not Native

ethnonational sovereignty. Similarly, “merciless savage” ideologies of Indians noted in the Declaration of Independence allow society White-blindness toward deeply racist constructions right in front of us, as with the professional football team Washington Redskins, and the Chief Wahoo mascot for the Cleveland Indians baseball team. We can only understand this racist iconography as “invisible” in our society (Robertson 2015), and not addressed by these race scholars, by observing its origins in the genocide and conquest of Indigenous peoples.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

The tasks that Glenn and Bonilla-Silva laid before us are clear—establishing the beginning points of racist formation as stages in developing the modern world-system, describing how settler colonialism produces and reproduces racist treatment of Indigenous peoples and other racial-ethnic groups, identifying the ideologies that obscure and protect ongoing racist systems, and observing modernism as an oppositional construct to indigenism.

What must be done is to merge three or four broad disciplinary approaches: racial (racist) formation and systemic racism theory, settler-colonialism and decolonization theory, Indigenous genocide and culturicide theory, and the political economy of world-systems analysis. We need to use existing theories of systemic racism within racist formulation periods that extend over 500 years of the modern world-system, to observe the advanced American capitalist society having a foundation in intentional racial genocide and Indigenous domination as state policies, profiteering from taking land and exploiting labor.

Systems of creating race and patterns of racism were global from the onset, and although these are situated in discrete racisms in particular places at particular times, now called racial formations, racist practices continued development in the Americas and transatlantic exchanges, which are fully global throughout the twentieth century, all forms exemplified in South Africa. Accompanying the formulation of capitalism during globalization of native racisms are forms of Euro-American colonization (frames) including settler colonialism and Indigenous genocide, creating institutionalized and ideological racisms (white racial frames) that drive neoliberalism, suppressing Indigenous peoples throughout the modern world.

We must not give in to genocidal discourse that discounts Indigenous peoples as too few to matter

when analyzing the development of such massively destructive systems of racism in the conquest of the post-Columbian Americas. We need to expand these analyses to observe macro-construction of race and systemic racism within the *longue durée* of the modern world-system and from Indigenous studies perspectives.

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