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Chad Shomura

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Decolonial Mood Work

Chad Shomura

Abstract This essay develops "decolonial mood work," a political project that changes affective orientations toward crises in settler society and prospects for decolonization. Decolonial mood work is a crucial supplement to scholarship that has focused on demystifying the ideological dimensions of settler colonialism. This essay shows that the regulation of affect is a central, though less addressed, operation of settler state and society. Its case is the management of houselessness in Hawai'i, which is shown to be a settler project that further dispossesses Indigenous peoples by enforcing the affects of settler home.

On October 10, 2017, the Hawai'i Community Development Authority (HCDA) indefinitely closed Kaka'ako Waterfront Park in downtown Honolulu. The 35-acre park boasts rolling hills, pavilions, fishing spots, surf areas, communities of feral chickens and cats, an unobstructed view of Lē'ahi (Diamond Head), and panoramas of the shimmering ocean. It also hosted the largest concentration of unhoused persons in Honolulu: about 180 at the time, down from a peak of 400 in 2015, many of whom were Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian) or Pacific Islander. The closure purportedly was a response to a string of fires, dog attacks, and vandalism. "It's reached a point where we just can't manage it," lamented HCDA executive director Jesse Souki.[1] Houselessness in Hawai'i was undergoing an explosion. In 2015, then-Governor David Ige issued an emergency proclamation devoting over $1.3 million to managing houselessness, from development of new temporary shelters, services, and housing programs to aggressive sweeps of unhoused communities across O'ahu.

If settler colonialism is about establishing home on occupied lands, then houselessness is a key window into settler logics. Houselessness troubles settler colonialism, as it reflects the state's incapacity to manage land and bodies and to fulfill its promises of the life worth living. It also marks a crisis in the moods of settler society. The management of houselessness, while pertaining to issues of shelter, is about what can and should be felt, and by whom. It is a practice of what I call "settler mood work," or dispossessing Indigenous peoples through the

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everyday maintenance of the affects, feelings, and emotions idealized by the settler good life.[2] While anchored in possessive relationships to land, the settler good life is as much about feelings like comfort, belonging, and happiness, as it is about material goods. The management of houselessness reveals that settler colonialism is reproduced through the cultivation of certain feelings and the denial of others.

This essay challenges settler colonialism by developing what I call "decolonial mood work," a political project that changes affective orientations toward settlement and decolonization. With a few exceptions, settler colonial studies have not examined the centrality of affect nearly as much as the ideological, discursive, and material dimensions of colonialism.[3] While some Indigenous scholars have described affect's role in decolonial praxis, the relationship between settlers, affect, and decolonization remains underexamined.[4] I wager that undoing settler affect is a key aspect of decolonization. Conceptualizing decolonial mood work is my way of heeding Bianca Isaki's keen observation that "Decolonization involves a shift in sensation. The idea is that undoing (not just historicizing) affective, corporeal, felt dimensions of attachments that keep us engrossed in broken political systems, like a US-occupied Hawai'i, might allow us to remake those attachments."[5]

This affective work is not accomplished through demystification alone, or by exposing hidden operations of power as a means of facilitating social and political change. Scholars and activists have compellingly demonstrated that the occupation of Hawai'i depends upon ideologically misrecognizing multiracial colonialism for a liberal postcolony.[6] However, as we will see, settlement is also grounded in powerful feelings, attachments, and gut reflexes that cannot be undone through critique alone.[7] This essay follows Adam Barker and Emma Lowman's insistence that "Reconfiguring relationships [to both people and places] must be premised on the creation of spaces that encourage pre-cognitive, emotional engagements with personal and collective settler complicity."[8] While decolonial mood work heeds their call to produce failed subjects, it also augments decolonial potentials that are in, and against, the settler here and now. I conceptualize decolonial mood work as an aid to critiques of the discursive, material, and ideological fronts of settler colonialism. It is a supplement, not a substitute.

This essay works through settler colonial studies, affect theory, and an autoethnography of settler life to elaborate the affective dimensions of settler colonialism and decolonial mood work. What feelings does settler colonialism cultivate? Which does it extinguish? What might become possible if settlers linger in the affective cracks of settler society? How might they heed decolonial futures even as—or precisely because—they are unsettling?

While decolonial mood work can take many forms, from poetry to protest, I focus on autoethnography here because it can convey

the affective binding of settler selves and worlds. I am an Okinawan Japanese settler who was born and raised in Oʻahu, Hawaiʻi and moved to the continental United States for graduate studies and later an academic post. I have been writing an autoethnography of Hawaiʻi as home to better understand and intervene in the affective reproduction of settlement that is all around me and within. Settler scholars Peggy Choy, Candace Fujikane, and Dean Saranillio have inspired this self-critique with their reflections on migration, labor, and activism to build allyship in decolonization.[9] Rather than historicizing settlement like they do, my autoethnographic work addresses the sensorium of settler ordinary life and evokes affective components of decolonization. Decolonial mood work is my contribution to settler allyship.

This essay moves through critique and autoethnography not merely to give examples of decolonial mood work but to enact it. The autoethnographic fragments concern Kakaʻako Park, though some attend to houselessness on Oʻahu more broadly. They were written and rewritten, mostly during visits to Oʻahu between 2011 and 2019. Some are snapshots of particular episodes. Others convey the moods of a shifting landscape. The fragments hold attention on happenings and feelings that settler society aims to extinguish. I invite you to linger in them. They remain textured rather than honed to a fine point, for while explication can clarify, it can also dampen. This essay seeks not only to persuade but to cultivate an attunement to the affective workings of settler colonialism. It's hard to do both. Here, I set up critical exposition and autoethnographic writing to play off each other; more juxtaposition than reflection or overt connection. Yet, some autoethnographic details stray from the fragments, blowing across the page and littering the patches of critique, shaking up writing from conventional modes and, perhaps, helping analysis and attunement cross into each other.

As the settler state forces unhoused people into shelters or just out of this and that neighborhood, it covers up the sense that settler society is falling apart and that it was never fully put together either. Can settlers desire this undoing of our lives and worlds? Perhaps, if ethics and politics turn away from the settler good life and give space to bad feelings. Decolonial mood work takes up those efforts, orienting settlers toward decolonization even as decolonization undoes our footing.

Compassionate Disruption: The Settler Biopolitics of Houselessness

At the beginning of June 2014, then-Honolulu Mayor Kirk Caldwell launched a "war on homelessness" under the rubric of "compassionate disruption." The bellicose campaign has included bans on sitting and

lying down on sidewalks, routine sweeps of encampments, confiscation of belongings, fines, and jail time. The policy has not solved houselessness but made it even harder for many unhoused people to secure permanent shelter. The confiscation of identification cards, clothing, and work supplies have strained access to jobs and social services. Children have missed school because their school supplies have been taken. Although Caldwell's successor, Rick Blangiardi, campaigned in 2020 on a promise to end compassionate disruption, his office has continued regular sweeps in the name of sanitation.

Let "compassionate disruption" name not a specific policy but a biopolitical strategy to manage houselessness by forcibly transforming unhoused people into proper subjects of home. Compassionate disruption seeks to make living in public impossible so that unhoused people would move into shelters, work to become housed, and aim for the good life built around property. Executive director of the Institute for Human Services Connie Mitchell captures the rationale of compassionate disruption: "When people are moved and they are uncomfortable, they make different choices. And until people are uncomfortable enough, they won't make the choice to accept services sometimes."[10] Compassionate disruption transforms houselessness from a structural issue into a personal one and institutes a differential valuation of unhoused people, renters, and homeowners. In this view, unhoused people are socially expendable but potentially salvageable. Compassionate disruption makes life worse to make it better—or, more accurately, to produce another form of life. It is forced capacitation, the making-sovereign of a subject over their aspirations, their decisions, their body, their fate.

Compassionate disruption manages populations by instigating anxiety, dread, and fear. Just listen to one unhoused Kanaka Maoli woman regarding the police officers and city workers who sweep encampments: "I have nightmares that they are here when they aren't really here."[11] Compassionate disruption aims to form proper subjects through relentless terror, not discomfort. This mode of disciplining is panpathic, not panoptic. Eschewing the gaze and sense of being watched, compassionate disruption makes unhoused people feel the prospect of displacement all around. It forms a heavy affective atmosphere that does not disperse when disciplinary agents clock out for the day. In fact, the dread intensifies in the yawning gap between sweeps. While sweeps are of course terrifying, the menace of compassionate disruption comes from being a threat, likely to arrive though uncertainly when: is this the day to lose everything again or will it be tomorrow? Compassionate disruption is biopolitical strategy as affective atmosphere, an ambience that festers between enactments, a power all the more severe for *not* being actual.[12]

While compassionate disruption putatively aims to end houselessness, its function is managerial. As Craig Willse points out, policies on houselessness "are not a social end to housing insecurity, but an economic management of its continuation through the production and circulation of those ideas and aims."[13] Of all US states, Hawai'i has the highest rate of houselessness and is consistently ranked the most unaffordable. When Kaka'ako Waterfront Park closed, Honolulu residents needed almost four times the minimum wage (then $9.25 an hour) to pay less than 30 percent of their income on rent.[14] Half of O'ahu residents were spending more than that, while a third were spending half of their income.[15] These extraordinary housing costs are due to a scarcity of land due to military bases and training areas, rent subsidies for military personnel, the tourism industry, and home and land grabs by out-of-state residents and speculators. Compassionate disruption engages the symptom of houselessness (encampments), thus enabling the causes (settler capitalism) to flourish.[16]

Compassionate disruption reflects the severity of the threat posed by houselessness to settler capitalism. Houselessness jeopardized the lucrative development of Kaka'ako through boutiques, pricey restaurants, night markets, global art events, and luxury high-rises whose units list for upwards of $36 million. While the management of houselessness protects capitalist interests, it also advances a settler notion of home. Settler home presumes that: domesticity is the key that unlocks the good life; private and public spheres are distinct, with the reproduction of life reserved to the former; home is anchored to private property but extends to certain public spaces, like parks; family is human-only, as seen in the exclusion of nonhuman animal kin from shelters; and the state is responsible for producing feelings based on the good life. Houselessness defies each of these presumptions and threatens the settler state's posturing as a sovereign authority over occupied lands.

The settler management of houselessness affects all Indigenous peoples even when it targets anybody. Tina Grandinetti observes, "Only certain modes of dwelling and living in relation to housing and home are recognized as valid, and Indigenous ways of life are constructed as another constitutive exclusion."[17] In contrast with settler notions of home, home for Kānaka Maoli does not center on private property, prioritize the nuclear family, or exclude nonhumans from kinship. Its heart is 'āina (land that feeds) and genealogical relations with all life descendent from Papa (Earth Mother) and Wākea (Sky Father).[18] Many unhoused Kānaka in Hawai'i insist that they are not homeless because they are home in their homeland.[19] By aiming to cultivate subjects based in domesticity and private property, houselessness management displaces Indigenous notions of home and

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thus embodies what Patrick Wolfe calls the settler colonial "logic of elimination."[20] This logic is clearly seen in settler colonialism's disproportionate unhousing of Indigenous peoples who are, for this and other reasons, prematurely exposed to death.[21] It is also fired up in efforts to shelter Indigenous peoples when it compels the surrender of Indigenous notions of home. The management of houselessness is a key tool of settler colonialism because it replaces Indigenous notions of home with settler ones. Making settlers feel right at home maintains occupation of Native land.

To produce proper subjects of the settler good life, compassionate disruption destroys the conditions from which other forms of life could emerge. These are indexed by houselessness and Indigeneity. As Grandinetti writes, "In occupied Hawai'i, the dream of 'proper homes' defined by the settler state is a dream for a Hawai'i cleared of the houseless and the Hawaiian."[22] Unhoused people indicate a capacity to reproduce life outside domestic contexts. Indigenous peoples embody potential for a decolonized world. Unhoused Indigenous peoples evoke the settler colonialism's fragility, decolonization's possibility, and Indigenous resurgence all at once.[23] These forms of life may be seen in communities of unhoused peoples, Indigenous and settler, who have lived with the land in defiance of settler norms of family, public space, and home. The settler state has dismantled many such communities in Hawai'i, like those at Sand Island (1980), Waimānalo (1985), and Mākua (1996). It disallows settler encounters with the forms of life gestated around houselessness, Indigeneity, and crossings of the two. This normalizes settler home and mitigates the troubling sense that settler society is far more brittle than it projects itself to be.

To reinforce settlement, the management of houselessness coordinates public affect. Compassionate disruption inculcates desire for the settler good life through the weaponization of affect as ever-present threat. The settler state tries to prevent encounters that result in bad feelings by clearing houselessness from public space. Bad feelings, as much as the bodies associated with them, are the object of the management of houselessness. Settler colonialism erases certain feelings to preserve others. The next sections explore key affects that organize settlement: comfort, disgust, and rage.

Settler Comfort

> Once upon a time, I would spend hours at the park. One day is clear and sunny even as clouds brood over the mountains to the north. The hills of the park are so green and rolling that you'd never know they were built on a landfill. People talk story in truck beds as remote-control cars zoom about the parking lot. The palm

> trees are curved by the trade winds that carry the salt of the sea. A promenade of smooth bricks rolls out along the ocean. Fishers rest their poles in the cracks of the large rocks that make up the shore and gaze at the horizon. Children slide down the hills on flattened cardboard boxes as their parents and uncles and aunts soak in the day. There are picnics and family gatherings with coolers strewn about and loud music spilling from boom boxes. Black-and-white cats lounge on the rocks and stare at passersby. Cruise ships and cargo barges sail at sunset. Couples have wedding photos taken in a golden glow. The sea swallows the sun and then the light. The park empties. The night is quiet, save for the brushing of waves against the large rocks and the hum of the occasional airplane overhead. It's easy to fall asleep, to fall into these lovely little sounds, to feel one with the world.

A principal aim of the settler state is to make settlers comfortable. "To be comfortable," writes Sara Ahmed, "is to be so at ease with one's environment that it is hard to distinguish where one's body ends and the world begins."[24] Settler comfort is the sense of occupied lands as intimate parts of oneself: an entitlement to Native lands, grounded in law and translated into feeling. It is "settler common sense," Mark Rifkin's term for "The ways the legal and political structures that enable nonnative access to Indigenous territories come to be lived as given."[25] Settler givenness depends on the erasure of histories of dispossession and ongoing contestation over Native lands. It grounds the expectation that settlement is here to stay.[26] Thus, settler comfort is the affective register of not only spatial claims but also what Rifkin calls "settler time," by which a future defined by settlement relegates Indigeneity to a vanishing past.[27] It is the feeling of settler foreignness becoming new nativity. In short, settler comfort is the feeling of decolonization made impossible. A settler could easily fall asleep in a park without a thought of who was there before or what might come next.

While projected as secure, settler comfort is utterly rickety, propped up by an airy fantasy of sovereignty over bodies, space, and time. Houseless encampments threaten settler comfort because they visceralize the state's inability to manage occupied land. At Kaka'ako, they included humans, dogs, and an eclectic bunch of things. They spilled over on all sides. Pieces of paper and bits of cardboard scattered with the wind. Food rotted. Fires broke out. Dogs freely roamed and bit people. Houseless encampments are self-organizing assemblages that exceed the state's managerial capacities.[28] One may be swept away but others appear, ceaselessly. Houselessness evokes the sense that settler comfort can be reinforced but never established, that oneness with the world may be forever out of reach despite it being constantly promised.

Settler Disgust

> The park wasn't always like this. Now there are heaps of trash and stray objects scattered about. Glass bottles filled with strange liquids. A discarded sandal. Empty shampoo bottles. Cords. Plastic food containers. Styrofoam takeout boxes. Candy wrappers. A corned beef can. Aluminum foil. Instant ramen packaging. Scraps of paper integrated with grass. Graffiti here and there.
>
> Tents made up of tarp and twine cluster around picnic tables, benches, and the trees that provide shade on cloudless days. There are shopping carts, bicycles, wheels, coolers, mattresses, mounds of boxes and ballooning trash bags. Tents ring around the half-moon center of the promenade. Streams of water flow out of the restrooms. A large container of laundry detergent sits by the entrance.
>
> Little dogs saunter about or take naps on cardboard or fabric. Egrets bob their heads forward with each slow step. People chat around picnic tables by the parking lot. Fishers lounge by the shore. The air is calm, save for the chatter of excited mynah birds. The wedding photo shoots at sunset are gone, but lots of people still gather with phones and cameras primed for the color show ahead.
>
> The sherbet sky melts into a million hues of yellow, orange, pink, lavender, indigo. There is talk and there is laughter and there is life.
>
> This is what the HCDA destroyed.

Settler comfort is upset when public moods turn sour. The problem is not taking up public space per se. No one at the park tells others to turn down the music or orders a soccer game or picnic or yoga class to move. Journalists don't unleash waves of articles about these people: supposedly law-abiding residents and tourists who are presumably housed and engaged in the proper use of public space. Houselessness is spotlighted due to an association with disgust. Unhoused people—always lumped into one whole—are blamed for trash, blamed for graffiti, blamed for dirtiness. Of course, trash in the park is produced by housed people. Visitors throw away things. Tourists litter, lots. People would leave food, clothing, and toiletries for unhoused people that, if unused, become tattered, tumble about, decay. Meanwhile, unhoused residents of the park organized weekly cleanups. Nonetheless, trash is "stuck" to unhoused people with the adhesive of disgust.[29]

Although seemingly natural, disgust is a socially fraught feeling, dense with history and charged with power. While trying to minimize

disgust, the settler state provides what Ann Laura Stoler calls a "sentimental education" in what settler society more broadly has deemed to be disgusting.[30] Disgust solicits exclusion, surveillance, and correction in the name of public health and social morality to enforce colonial divisions between people. As Elisabeth Anker puts it, "disgust can be pressed to represent the borderline status of people who are not accorded a stable identity in a sovereign self, especially those who have been historically colonized and enslaved."[31] Unhoused people are made to be another paradigmatic figure of disgust for their putative failure to control their bodies and cap their influence. Settler disgust is a potent, inculcated reaction to ungovernable forces that threaten settler propriety.

Houselessness might not elicit disgust if it were confined to spaces marked for abandonment and decay that could be avoided. On Oʻahu, houselessness is more intensely policed in tourist hotspots and areas of commercial development. What marks houselessness as disgusting is its felt intrusion of bodies into spaces held to be whole and clean. Ahmed observes that disgust is experienced as an "offence to bodily space, as if the object's *invasion* of that space was a necessary consequence of what seems disgusting about the object itself."[32] Disgust over houselessness stems from feeling violated by what cannot, will not be contained.

Although attached to houselessness, settler disgust originates in claims to Native lands. Because settler common sense is grounded in entitlement to Native lands, settlers experience what lies beyond our skin as intimate parts of ourselves. Parks and sidewalks are part of our extended bodies. Houselessness in public space is thus felt viscerally, not as merely present but intrusive. Ahmed's description of disgust as invasive is thus especially apt. The experience of settler disgust stems from conflating settler bodies and public spaces. Settler common sense makes settler disgust a constitutive affect of settler society.

Settler disgust also has significant temporal implications. The object judged to be disgusting comes from elsewhere, upending a body whose here-ness is taken for granted. Hence, settler disgust is a story of befores and afters, of bodies once whole and now violated. The temporality of settler disgust makes unhoused persons, whether settler or not, into entitled invaders by forgetting settler invasion into Native lands. By attributing invasiveness to the disgusting (unhoused) object, the (housed) settler subject is then framed as noninvasive and thus properly belonging at the expense of Natives, allowed to be neither subject nor object as they are scrubbed from time. Disgust over houselessness makes settler occupation of lands feel given. It evidences that settlers are possessive of time as well as space: "It wasn't always like this."[33]

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Settler Rage

> At some point in time, tents began to appear on the sidewalks leading to the park. Just a few dots at first. Then lines. The tent cities seemed to grow each time I returned, until they were gone. Razed by cops on orders of the city to keep paradise pretty for business and tourists. They returned, again and again, until they didn't. Until the area became home to food trucks and the bustle of open markets.
>
> As Kaka'ako gentrifies with shiny new high rises, unhoused peoples face more hostility. Vitriol fills the comments section of online newspaper articles on houselessness. Bus stop benches are updated with metal partitions to prevent people from lying down. Two city council members try to pass a bill that would fine bus riders who are too odorous. A state lawmaker patrols downtown with a sledgehammer to bash shopping carts of the unhoused.
>
> As the Honolulu Chinatown next to Kaka'ako is "revitalized" with boutiques, restaurants, bars, and First Friday events, business owners grow fed up with the presence of unhoused people. They organize community meetings and patrol the neighborhood. Storefront windows glare with signs warning about the enforcement of laws. No sitting or lying on the sidewalk. No drugs or alcohol.
>
> Meanwhile, some unhoused people are beaten, stabbed, killed, just for being around. Just for being.

Disruption of settler comfort foments outrage. On the day that Kaka'ako Park was closed, the *Honolulu Civil Beat* published an article, "Give Us Back Our Parks." "What has enraged law-abiding residents," bemoaned journalist Denby Fawcett, is "the sense of entitlement of homeless people who seem to believe they have a special right to commandeer public land."[34] Settler law makes unhoused people seem entitled to lands that supposedly belong to proper settlers whose own sense of entitlement to Native lands is made acceptable, hard-earned.

Disgust generates rage. As Bianca Isaki has shown, settler rage against unhoused people emerges over supposedly improper, disgusting uses of public space.[35] Settler rage stems from, to borrow Ahmed's words, "the ingestion of the disgusting."[36] Rage rises as houselessness is felt to slide down settler throats. "I have a heart, believe me I have compassion," writes one O'ahu resident to the *Honolulu Star-Advertiser*. "But to close off our parks, paid for by our taxes, because of illegal squatters at places like Kakaako [sic] Waterfront Park, is"—recalling Ahmed's description of disgust via ingestion—"*impossible to swallow*."[37]

Recovery from the topsy-turvy feeling of disgust depends upon throwing up the invasive object.[38] Settler rage is sledgehammers and knives, but also policy and infrastructure. Compassionate disruption is settler rage as biopolitical strategy. Fawcett urged the state to enforce SB895, passed on July 10, 2017, which designated after-hours park occupancy as a criminal offense. When Kaka'ako Park reopened on January 8, 2018, it was patrolled by a private security force at an annual expense of $331,000.[39] Compassionate disruption is the extraction of what has crawled into settler guts through an extended skin. Although in colonial fantasy local settler identity in Hawai'i is defined by kindness, its affective structure is rage. If there is any moral barrier between cruelty and care, rage gets settler society jumping to tear it down.

Yet, the settler state's mission to restore comfort is hopelessly compromised by the very worldview it tirelessly pushes. The origin of disgust is settler common sense. The feeling of being one with occupied lands makes intolerable encounters tough to avoid. Settler capitalism intensifies this. It affixes disgust to the houselessness that it actively produces through the rampant development of land, which prices more and more people out of housing. It can respond only by innovating more cruel, more pervasive, more relentless ways to police unhoused peoples. Unsurprisingly, it fails. Responsible for good feelings yet generating unbearable ones, the settler state twists itself into knots trying to solve a problem that it brings into being.

No wonder the affects of the colony are all out of whack. Immense, ongoing work is needed to calibrate collective moods to the settler good life. Compassionate disruption reinforces the affective binding of settler society. It removes houselessness from public space to reestablish settler sovereignty over bodies and spaces that never existed but which are felt to be threatened. Yet, comfort will never be established as long as settler society translates entitlement to land into affective expectation—that is, as long as settler society remains itself. Where the state fails, settlers pick up the slack.

Mood Work

> Early summer is full of trips to the park in search of discarded plastic bottles for an art project. Before entering the park, I plug up my ears with music, snap on yellow gloves, plop down my sunglasses, and make the rounds. I peer into trash barrels. Many are empty, some are not. I sift through refuse and smells.
>
> There are less than two months to collect a couple thousand bottles. The pressure makes me indiscriminately empty out bottles until nausea teaches me to ignore rotten dairy. My throat seizes up. I wretch. I gasp.

> After returning to my car, I peel off the gloves and try to erase the rubbery smell with a lemongrass hand sanitizer. No amount is enough. I zip to the newly built South Shore Market in nearby Ward Village—not for the pricey shops, yoga studio, or hot restaurant but for the automated faucets, foam soap, and hand dryer of a brightly-lit restroom. The floor is dry, the antiseptic aroma strangely relaxing.

Settlers undertake the affective labor of maintaining settlement. We tweak the course of our days to mitigate unbearable feelings. We patch together a protective skin with so many fabrics, accessories, devices, and gels. We quicken our pace and keep our distance. We avoid others; we avoid other futures.

Settler mood work is the never-ending, intricate labor of calibrating the affects of settlement. According to Jennifer Carlson and Kathleen Stewart, mood is not a subjective feeling or an objective state. It is "a contact zone for the strange and prolific coexistence of sense and world."[40] Mood is a muddled middle, a not-quite-there *some*thing, vague yet palpable. Selves get caught up in moods, sometimes collectively. Mood work concerns "how a community throws itself together not through identity categories or a representational order but more directly and mundanely through common orientations to breaking forces and events and their catchment areas."[41] Mood work does not commence from a base of knowledge. Its practitioners cultivate a sense of openness—"watching and waiting," in the words of Stewart, for what may arise (or not).[42] Mood work forms collectives by adjusting sensibilities to the happenings of ordinary life. Although Carlson and Stewart do not address settler colonialism, mood work in a settler society is politically fraught because settlement conditions ordinary life. The state tunes public affect to settler home, as when compassionate disruption clears sidewalks and parks of encampments. The peacefulness of a stroll is the affective tone of displacement layered on dispossession.

Settler mood work better captures the everyday labor of cultivating the affects of settlement than does Stoler's notion of sentimental education. Try as it might, the settler state cannot contain a problem fostered by its very nature. Settler society is reproduced through, in Rifkin's words, "ordinary phenomena by nonnative, nonstate actors, in ways that do not necessarily affirm settlement as an explicit, conscious set of imperatives/initiatives or coordinate with each other as a self-identical program."[43] Settler mood work may be undertaken by settlers and Natives, for different reasons and to different effects. It is typically unconscious and unintentional. The benefits of doing so, and the costs of not, are differentially distributed.

Settler mood work cultivates feelings prized by the settler good life, such as comfort, belonging, safety, and happiness. Governing the senses to feel certain things but not others, settler mood work requires vigilance. Watching and waiting can be hopeful, but can also be tense. Housed people remain on edge with the arrival of every new cart or tent in the neighborhood, anxious about the moment when disconnected folks might tip over into an unruly encampment. In the face of cracks and crises in settler society, trying to feel better is no innocent matter. It may be the work of reinforcing settlement.

If mood work can preserve settlement, it also can work toward decolonization. Decolonial mood work shares the attributes of mood work described by Carlson and Stewart: the affective formation of selves and collectives; attunement to ordinary life; and attentiveness to what could happen. Yet, it is decidedly geared toward decolonization. Its realm includes the affective tones of dispossession; the labor of undoing attachments to settlement; and drumming up desire for decolonial worlds. Decolonial mood work can be undertaken by settlers and Natives, separately or collectively, to build allyship. It interferes with the everyday reproduction of settler common sense and heightens receptiveness to decolonial futures already in the making.

Putting mood work and decolonization together is dicey. While mood work cultivates openness to the unfolding of ordinary life, decolonization is dead-set on the return of lands. Openness and set aim. If decolonization governs mood work, then attention may become selective, filtering out the odd-ends of settler life to reinforce established modes of critical thought and political action. This path is unpromising because some of the firmest affective roots of settlement may be dismissed as mere mundanity. Yet, if mood work governs decolonization, then sensorial attunement may become a substitute for the return of land. This path is worse; as Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang insist, "decolonization doesn't have a synonym."[44] Decolonial mood work is thus a vexed project. There is no model, no checklist of best practices. It is part heightened sensitivity, part reworking of selves and collectives, with both in tension and held together out of commitment to decolonization.

The upshot of this predicament is that decolonial mood work can take many forms. Minimally, it embraces affect as crucial for decolonial praxis. Decolonial mood work proceeds from a hunch that settler colonialism is reproduced in subtle and surprising ways. It traces ordinary life with an eye to the operations, persistence, and evolution of settler colonialism. It also registers and amplifies the decolonial potentials simmering therein. Watching and waiting are key to decolonial mood work since, as Neetu Khanna writes, "It is where visceral logics misbehave… that the possibilities of decolonization are imagined."[45]

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Decolonization is also imaginable where visceral logics behave too well, as the intensity of settler affects like disgust and rage indicate buckling at the pressure points of the colony.

Autoethnography is valuable for decolonial mood work when it registers the subtleties of settlement and decolonial potentiality. According to Stewart, autoethnography can illustrate "what happens to people, how force hits bodies, how sensibilities circulate and become, perhaps delicately or ephemerally, collective."[46] Positing that ordinary life does not align with grand narratives, autoethnography dotes on minor details, subtle intensities, and the squiggly lines of ordinary life unfurling.[47] Autoethnography can tease out how settlement works through me even if it seems like I am just going for a walk, washing my hands, or driving away.

Of course, settler autoethnography could quickly lapse into navel-gazing, virtue-signaling, performance without substance. It might issue declarations of complicity in hopes of absolution. Autoethnography can easily invoke what I call "settler sentimentality": a genre that converts performances of sympathetic feelings over dispossession, like guilt and shame, into the matter of true allyship in decolonial struggle. Settler sentimentality prizes having one's heart in the right place as a good-enough ethical and political ambition. Equating an affective shift from indifference to concern with decolonization constitutes a "settler move to innocence."[48] Simply put, feeling right is not land back.

Although risky, autoethnography is useful for reinventing settler selves and collectives. It can involve writing against oneself and tweaking the affective relays of self and world. Rather than surveying an interior landscape of emotions, autoethnography can treat the self as a conduit of affects in circulation. The details of one's life are not exclusive to that life. They are contact points. Autoethnography may be a means by which, to borrow Lauren Berlant's words, "the singular becomes delaminated from its location in someone's story or some locale's irreducible local history and circulated as evidence of something shared."[49] The autoethnographic fragments here try to share the affects of settlement and its unraveling. The hope is that autoethnography can perform important decolonial mood work.

Even so, publicizing settler autoethnography could generate, in Jodi Byrd's incisive words, "a cacophony of moral claims that help to deflect progressive and transformative activism from dismantling the ongoing conditions of colonialism that continue to make the United States a desirable state formation within which to be included."[50] It might be better to keep autoethnography to oneself, especially if its form is settler sentimentality. Yet, sharing autoethnography could open space for sitting with disturbances to settler comfort without seeking resolution. Inclusion in the settler state might be made undesirable from many angles.

Decolonial mood work is not about inner transformation. It strives to make the intimate workings of settlement sensible, shift things about, and form collectives out of affects and orientations rather than identities. It makes decolonization desirable even as decolonization changes the conditions and forms of desire itself.

Decolonization, or the Unbearable

> Memories of unhoused people unfold. The times when I, as a kid, thought that the other families on Waiʻanae Beach were just camping too. Or, years earlier, when I watched a man sift through a dumpster while I ate a donut that tasted like dirt. There's the slow gait of the woman who lugs a shopping cart down King Street. The flipping-up of a half-open hand of the woman who talked to ghosts. The tuxedoed man who has walked through Mānoa Valley for decades. The man to whom I offered apples but had no teeth. The man on the bridge into Waikīkī who was still with a hand held out. He became animated with my approach and asked if I had any change to spare. I gave him my leftover pizza and left, unable to give the change that he didn't ask for.
>
> What would be required for that change to happen? Would I need to lose anything and, if so, what? The details, the gestures—unshakeable. Each new encounter brings their return, over and over, growing in intensity until they can no longer be borne.

In the scramble to preserve settler comfort, settler colonialism entrains us to feel certain things but not others. The opposite of comfort is not the uncomfortable, however, but the unbearable. According to Lee Edelman, "The unbearable names what cannot be borne by the subjects we think we are. We build our worlds in the face of it so as to keep ourselves from facing it, as if we implicitly understood that the unbearable as such can have no face and works to deprive us of ours."[51] For Edelman, the social and the subject can never be totalized, and certain people are blamed for that structural impossibility to maintain a fantasy of wholeness. Settler society attributes its endemic fault lines to unhoused and Indigenous peoples, abjecting both to mitigate the sense of the unbearable.

Decolonization also bears the force of the unbearable. As Tuck and Yang insist, "decolonization will require a change in the order of the world," which will also transform settler selves.[52] Settler investments in land are as affective as they are material. Following Berlant, let us say that for settler society, land is a preeminent "cluster of promises" grounding a sense of self and world.[53] Due to this integral function, loss of entitlement to land would not feel like the loss of any old thing.

It would be like losing the world. It would feel like losing the capacity to have optimism at all. Decolonization won't spare anything that settlers take for granted: not the common sense hardwired into bodies, not the good life, not the expectation of being grounded in perpetuity. While Indigenous and settler colonial studies have convincingly argued that discomfort is a productive part of building solidarity between settlers and Natives, they might also give the impression that settlers can remain fundamentally unchanged.[54] I don't think so. Discomfort does not grasp the significant affective weight of settler comfort, the intensity of settler experiences of crises in settler society and Indigenous refusal, or the cruel optimism manifest in the ferocious violences marshaled to fortify the colony. For settlers, decolonization is not uncomfortable. It is unbearable.

Yet, the unbearability of decolonization only appears like subjective and social negativity within settler frames. It is affirmative within Indigenous practices of refusal. The "no" of refusal is an emphatic "yes" to land, sovereignty, and decolonial futurity. Indigenous refusal entails living as though decolonial worlds were present—because they are present insofar as they are practiced. As Candace Fujikane puts it, "Kānaka Maoli have joined a broader decolonial movement of Indigenous peoples who are not waiting for the dismantling of occupying or settler states or the return of their ancestral lands but are actively living that independent future beyond the occupying or settler state in the present."[55] Settler society is full of decolonial leakages, like Pu'uhonua o Wai'anae, a long-standing community of 250 unhoused people, both Kānaka and settlers, in which "Kānaka Maoli cultural practices and land relations persist."[56] While Indigenous people are unhoused by settler capitalism, their efforts to connect with land, restore land, and cultivate Indigenous kinship practices are a refusal of settler home. While Edelman restricts the unbearable to negativity, Indigenous refusal ties it to affirming a decolonized world surging in and against the settler present.

Indigenous refusal performs decolonial mood work when it rejects settler regimes of feeling. A fine example is "Apologies," a poem by Kanaka activist, scholar, and poet Haunani-Kay Trask. The poem responds to the so-called Apology Resolution passed in 1993 by the US Congress, acknowledging the illegal overthrow of the Kingdom of Hawai'i a century prior. The resolution aimed at reconciliation, which includes Indigenous peoples in the settler national destiny as though exclusion were colonialism's true harm. Trask refuses this gesture in biting phrases: "Slogans of cheap grace / rather than land: / 'We apologize.' But not / one acre of taro, / one river of water, / one handful of labor… / Now we own / one dozen dirty pages / of American paper / to feed our people / and govern our nation."[57] Refusal rejects the

ideology of reconciliation and aims for the material substance of life and sovereignty (land, taro, water, labor). It also involves decolonial mood work, as indicated by the poem's form. "Apologies" shreds the positive mood of reconciliation with short, sharp lines. While reconciliatory efforts expect forgiveness, Trask returns anger. No peace on occupied lands. Decolonial mood work brings affective force to the counter-ideological and material aims of Indigenous refusal.

Settler regimes of feeling dismiss refusal by casting it as negative and antisocial. In 2014, the US Department of the Interior, without invitation, descended upon Hawai'i to gather feedback from Kānaka Maoli in public hearings regarding the creation of government-to-government relations. Many Kānaka viewed this effort as another attempt at colonial control because they are not under the DOI's purview. Insisting that Hawai'i is an independent nation, not a domestic tribe, most attendees replied to the DOI's broaching of federal recognition with "'A'ole!" (no!). Some Kanaka attendees apologized to the DOI for the perceived disrespect. Indigenous peoples who refuse are depicted as unproductive, hopelessly melancholic, resentful, and hostile.[58]

Settler regimes of feeling further disqualify refusal by making emotional performance into a key marker of Indigeneity. Some Kanaka apologists for the DOI called the forceful dissenters "un-Hawaiian." Kanaka scholars Stephanie Nohelani Teves and Maile Arvin attribute these responses to colonial pressures to "perform a certain way"—as kind, loving, and congenial—"to be really, actually, authentically Kānaka Maoli."[59] These pressures issued from the appropriation of aloha by Christianity, the settler state, and the tourism industry who together form what Teves calls an "aloha state apparatus."[60] Aloha has become a way to sell Hawai'i and keep Kānaka in line. It has been made to serve ideological, material, and affective functions for settler society. Aloha demands that Kānaka Maoli be emotional laborers rather than political subjects. Meanwhile, it enables settlers to be "Hawaiian at heart" if they consume Hawaiian culture and exude the so-called "aloha spirit," thus easing their claims to land.[61] By replacing genealogical lineage with emotional performance as the ground of Indigeneity, settler regimes of feeling discredit Indigenous peoples who engage in refusal.

Decolonial mood work not only makes refusal affectively charged. It treats affect as a terrain of political struggle, entangled with ideological and material lines but irreducible to them. Teves and Arvin observe that 'a'ole at the hearings was animated by an aloha rescued from settler capitalism and its affective demands; its anger was "aloha for our lāhui [nation]."[62] This 'a'ole was not, as Kanaka scholar David Uahikeaikalei'ohu Maile observes, merely to the DOI's questions and gestures of reconciliation. It was "rooted to and articulating our histor-

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ical tradition of resistance."[63] Powered by a century-and-a-quarter-long refusal of US settler colonialism, ʻaʻole marked a resurgence of Kānaka in defiance of settler expectations of warm feelings and proper behavior. It shows that decolonial mood work severs the colonialist links between emotional performance and authenticity, pitting settlers against Indigenous peoples and dividing Indigenous people among themselves. Decolonial mood work makes Indigenous refusal feel loving, because it is full of love.

As long as politics shies away from the unbearable, it will be committed to settler comfort and settler futurity. It will subject people to death and disappearance, slow and fast, just for settlers to feel good. Since Indigenous refusal often undertakes decolonial mood work, settlers must likewise undertake decolonial mood work to feel refusal otherwise. Decolonial mood work enables settlers to face decolonization, or the unbearable. It helps settlers to let go of entitlement and build relations undefined by settler home. While settler society makes the loss of settlement feel like the loss of optimism entirely, decolonial mood work moves optimism to unsettled ground: the reassembly of life in toto without certainty of what it could become. Decolonial mood work shifts the affective tones of decolonization while maintaining its force. This is how it finds love in loss.

Refusing Feeling

> After the park reopened, people once again enjoy slow walks along the full waterfront. There are no tents. The graffiti is gone. The restrooms have fresh coats of paint and the floors are dry. Some water fountains are still disassembled, perhaps serving as reminders of an unmanageable past that could return. There are signs full of new regulations in seemingly neutral language. No washing of clothing or hanging them to dry. No "camping" and no "camping items." No accessing of electricity. No letting animals roam. No no no.
>
> I once visited the park when it was still closed. There was a gentle drizzle. Everything was in dull tones, save for a bright orange, makeshift fence that surrounded the park. The fence did not extend to the rocky shoreline, so I easily entered. Apparently, others had done so too. Handprints of red paint graced the pillars that circle the promenade center. One trash can was full of cat food tins: traces of renegade care.
>
> The park had never felt so still.
>
> Yet in the air was a soft sense of all that settler society tries to destroy, and all that remains, that endures. The park teemed with

> forms of life that settler society could not bear. Its closure gathered houselessness and Indigeneity as potent threats to be eliminated in the name of home. Nonetheless, people opened detours around settler fences and feelings, landing in an unsettled state. The affects there are mundane and hence worth facing, dwelling in, amplifying. They bear the shakiness of all that is and the promise of all that could be.

Rachel Flowers writes, "As Indigenous peoples increasingly take up the politics of refusal, the settler too must demonstrate a willingness to be refused."[64] Her specific point is that settlers must accept the possibility of being left behind as Indigenous peoples lead the way to decolonization. Let us read her words more broadly. For settlers, decolonization involves being refused. It is the loss of entitlement to land and the grandiose feeling that settlement is needed to ground the world. It is about "center[ing] Indigeneity and allow[ing] it to change us," as Leanne Simpson puts it—an "us" principally of Indigenous peoples, but which may be read to include settlers as well.[65] For settlers need to be changed by Indigeneity—not by appropriating it, but by becoming responsive to it. Decolonial mood work builds the willingness to be refused, to face the unbearable, to be fundamentally changed.

If the capture of affect by settler colonialism is refused, then the only thing left to feel might be the future. Decolonial mood work crafts a sensorium embracing futures where Indigenous life is valued. Indigenous peoples have long taken up this work. Settlers must do so as well, not by initiating refusal but by acceding to a refusal that cuts through us, that comes from decolonial futures in and against the present, that leads us to become something else—something that cannot be known or seen, something that feels unbearable, and hence something that is vital for all.

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Notes

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