



Reorienting

Three Pillars of White Supremacy & Chinese Americans



Monica Chan

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Content warning: indigenous genocide, colonialism, war, anti-Black racism, police brutality

“There will never be justice in this Nation until we recognize the fundamental flaws in the building of this Nation.”

- Gyassi Ross, *Blackfoot Nation/Suquamish Territories*, Author

I feel empowered when I can clearly situate myself and what I’m feeling within systems greater than myself. Understanding how I am oriented within the greater logics of our world is a tool that helps me build up my agency. It helps me understand the mundane as well as the normalized violence and chaos. It helps me envision something different for the world that isn’t just a replication masked as something better.

White supremacy is a system of logics and institutions created over history that deeply mark all of our lives and wellbeing. Andrea Smith, a Cherokee scholar, articulates a definition of white supremacy in which I can orient myself as a second-generation Chinese-American. White supremacy has three defining logics: genocide, slavery, and orientalism. Each of these anchor and uphold a violent structure: genocide anchors settler colonialism, slavery anchors capitalism, and orientalism anchors war.

3 PILLARS OF WHITE SUPREMACY BY ANDREA SMITH

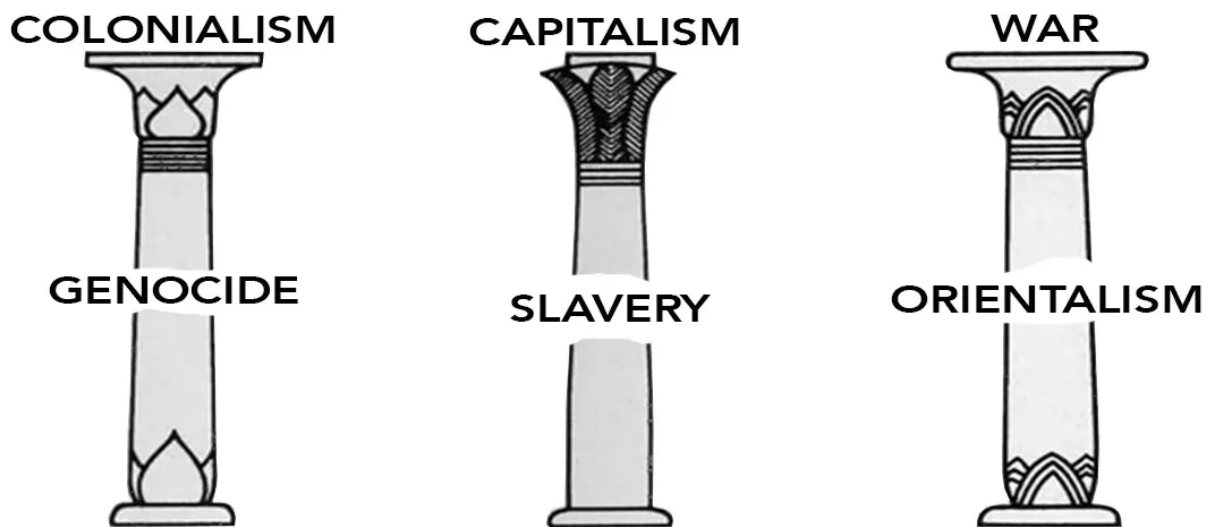


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Genocide anchors settler colonialism

The logic of genocide holds that Indigenous peoples must always be disappearing in order for Non-Native peoples to rationalize that they have a rightful claim over the land. We steal and occupy land and disrupt Native ways of living.

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Chinese Americans and settler colonialism

As Chinese people living in the settler colonial territory known as the United States, we continue the occupation and dispossession of Native land and life. 96 percent of the Chinese who came to the Americas in the 19th century were from Guangdong, the same province my dad is from. My people's histories expand(ed) settler colonial violence. As non-Native people, we are promised the protections of citizenship if we help continue colonization.

"Our Asian American tapestry, diverse and beautiful as it is, is woven on a fabric of Native American dispossession. Our Chinese American elders who worked and died constructing the Transcontinental Railroad labored in service of white America's vision of Manifest Destiny, a vision that necessitated the Trail of Tears. And our immigrant and refugee stories are too often co-opted in service of a "nation of immigrants" narrative that erases this country's founding pillars of slavery and genocide."

– 18 Million Rising

Slavery anchors capitalism

Under white supremacy, Blackness is equated with slaveability. When combined with capitalism, it applies a racial hierarchy to this economic system. We see this today in the criminalization of Blackness and the prison industrial complex. The current prison system mushroomed soon after the end of legal slavery. The Thirteenth Amendment outlaws slavery and involuntary servitude “except as a punishment for a crime, whereof the party shall have been duly convicted.” There are more Black people in prison today than there were enslaved at the height of slavery.

Chinese Americans and anti-Black racism

As Chinese Americans, we perpetuate anti-Black racism. We are told that if we just work hard we can earn money, survive, and be content. The racialization of capitalism makes this possible for us as Asian Americans. We are not at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Our labor is not as devalued.



“EMPIRE INTO FOREST” by Jess Snow

Orientalism anchors war

Orientalism was theorized and deepened by Edward Said, a Palestinian intellectual. Since then, his theories of the Arab world have been applied to East and South Asia as well. Orientalism is a belief system the West developed about the East as a contrasting and inferior image. Asia (Central, South, Southeast, and East) held Europe's oldest, greatest, and richest colonies, as well as the source of its most persistent images of the Other. Orientalism marks people of the Orient and its nations as inferior and a constant, permanent foreign threat to the wellbeing of the West's empire. This justifies the United States' constant state of war.

Situating our lives

Each of us are trapped within our pillar of white supremacy because we benefit from participating in and reinforcing the other pillars. For instance, all non-Native peoples benefit from continuing the occupation of indigenous lands. Non-Black people of color are promised that they will not be at the bottom of the racial hierarchy. Black, Native, Latino, and Asian people are promised security if they join U.S. wars to help protect imperialist interests. People of color organizing is more effective when we understand how we are situated in each other's oppression.

"Solidarity is an uneasy, reserved, and unsettled matter that neither reconciles present grievances nor forecloses future conflict."

– Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang
Decolonization is not a metaphor

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A Chinese American Radical History Project

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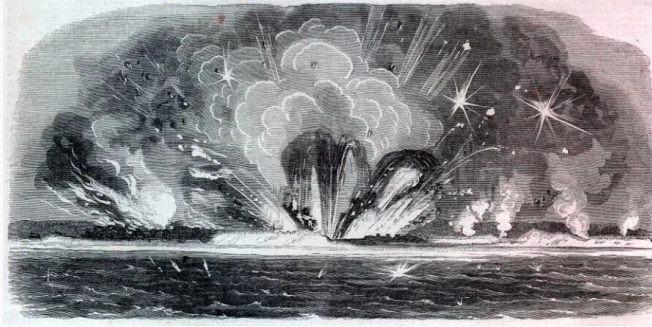


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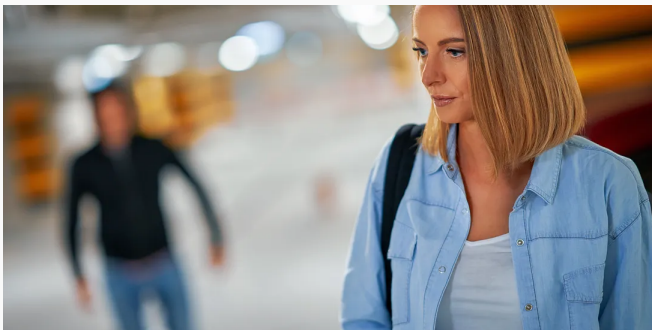
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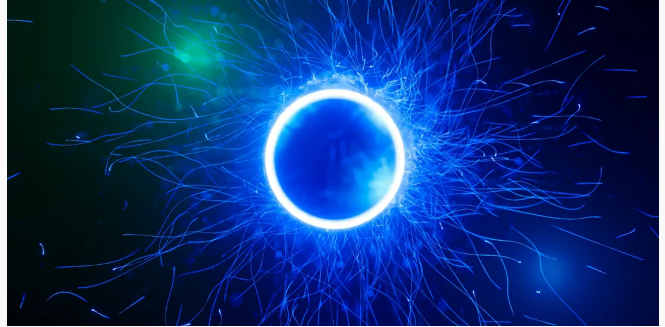
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