

COLONIALISM AND THE DIS-ORDERS OF LOVE

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The recent resurgence of Black Lives Matter into the public eye in response to the killings of George Floyd and other African Americans by police has stimulated reflections by members of the NASC Board of Systemic Constellations principles that are being violated in both the United States and Canada in terms of race. Two of us, Deborah Gavrin Frangquist and Jonathan Hooton, briefly express here how we see Hellinger's Orders of Love have been violated in our respective countries.

Bert Hellinger's orders of love and belonging acknowledge what is, including that each of us is a member of larger systems – family, tribe, heritage. The experiences of these larger groups resonate in our lives, especially when we don't acknowledge their presence. In the case of large-scale collective entanglements, we as facilitators may well be involved in the same entanglements we seek to resolve. Specifically, in regard to racial dynamics and injustice in the United States and Canada, we are all entangled, whether our ancestors were slave-traders, slaves, or settler colonists, or we ourselves arrived recently. We live amidst institutions, assumptions, cultural conventions, and linguistic patterns, which are embedded in the patterns of who has dominated and who has been dominated in our societies and governments from colonial days to the present. In this essay, we seek to name historical violations of the Orders of Love and recognize how we personally have been entangled in them.

Jonathan writes:

A child of the British Empire, I was conceived in Jerusalem in September 1946 during the British mandate of Palestine where my father was a lawyer for the British administration preceding the birth of the state of Israel. I was brought up in Hong Kong, a British colony, and in British boarding schools, a system designed to produce adults prepared to administer the British Empire and its colonies.

In 1982, I emigrated to Edmonton, located on Treaty 6 land in Alberta, Canada. Following the suicide of my brother, I immersed myself in Cree healing rituals of sweat lodges and talking circles. Here I heard the personal testimonies of those educated and terrorized in residential schools (a strong resonance for me with British boarding schools) and of First Nations peoples excluded from their lands, ceremonies, voting, and Canadian society in general, an extreme violation of Hellinger's *Order of Inclusion*. This latter education revealed a different non-linear perspective of the place of humans in nature and the explicit equality of the circle, so different from the patriarchal, paternalist conditioning of my upbringing.

I have used the Orders of Love to briefly show how they have been dishonored in relation to the Indigenous, or First Nations, peoples of Canada:

Order of Inclusion: Besides the exclusions mentioned above, the residential school system, in operation from 1879 to 1986, was deliberately designed to destroy Indigenous culture by removing children from their families and to “kill the Indian in him and save the man.” That loss of parents and family, a transgenerational trauma, has a continuing profound effect on Indigenous families. Today, suicide and incarceration rates are disproportionately high compared with non-Indigenous Canadians. Missing and murdered First Nations women and girls are predominately under-investigated.

Duncan Campbell Scott, who administered the residential school system between 1913 and 1932, was an ardent assimilationist and proponent of the eradication of Indigenous nations and cultures, despite agreements that guaranteed their independence. It is important to note that ‘assimilation’ is often used as a synonym of ‘inclusion.’ However, assimilation is a form of exclusion, denying the identity and self-agency of those assimilated. Assimilation is inherently colonial.

The 1876 Indian Act continues to hamstring the ability of First Nations peoples to develop their own economies, excluding them from the economic benefits of Canadian commerce.

Order of Precedence: While the word ‘aborigine’ means ‘from the beginning’ the Indigenous peoples of Canada have not been honoured for being here before the flood of settler colonialism squeezed them onto reserves. Indeed, in almost every way, the Indigenous peoples have been treated as small in relation to the superior, paternalistic ways of the dominant western culture.

Order of Reciprocity: The settler colonialism of Canada enforced the removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands onto reserves: a one-sided taking. Many of the initial treaties with the Indigenous peoples of Canada were reciprocal in that the use of their lands through treaties were rental agreements: i.e. ones of reciprocal give-and-take. These agreements were soon dishonoured. The rental payments, in the form of materials and tax benefits, were unilaterally reframed as ‘gifts,’ allowing the governing powers to dismiss the reciprocal arrangements and prioritize taking.

Deborah writes:

My great-grandparents brought their families to the United States fleeing European empires which restricted Jews’ movement and livelihood and often threatened them with violence. I grew up in Tarrytown, New York, which had been a stop on the Underground Railroad, where I attended racially integrated schools. I have lived most of my adult life on Ramaytush Ohlone Land (San Francisco, California).

Following Jonathan's example, I have briefly described how the Orders of Love have been violated in the United States both in relation to Indigenous communities and to Black Americans. The lens of Constellation helps me see a disturbing history of violations of all three orders.

The *Order of Inclusion* was violated from the beginning of colonization in relation both to Indigenous people and to Black people kidnapped in Africa and enslaved. Both groups have been treated and regarded as less than human, labeled "savages," denied voice in where they lived, how they worshipped, and how they raised their children. Both groups have been denied voting rights, by law and by force.

The *Order of Precedence* has been violated by destruction and denial of the proper regard for family and ancestors and deliberate interruption of the transmission of culture, ritual, and language. Indigenous children were separated from their parents in residential schools, adults were imprisoned on "reservations" ruled by whites, and their lands were appropriated for white use. Enslavement of Black people included separation of families and frequent rape of Black women, with the resulting children disowned by their white fathers. White slave owners falsely claimed to be benevolent "civilizers" of both children and adults, positioning themselves as bigger than the natural parents. For both Indigenous and Black populations, incarceration and economic domination have disrupted the ability of parents to care for their children.

The *Order of Reciprocity* has been repeatedly violated by the breaking of treaties with Indigenous peoples. Black people have been economically exploited even after slavery officially ended, and Indigenous people have been economically neglected. Both groups have been betrayed by broken promises and unequal access to education, medical care, and livelihood. The history is of taking by whites, without giving or exchange.

We conclude with a fourth principle, often added to the Orders of Love, 'Acknowledging What Is.' To become aware of and face our own inherent biases, we need to learn the histories of our countries, most notably the experiences and histories expressed by those of the colonized and enslaved peoples. African American and Indigenous authors and historians are now being widely published, i.e. included and seen/heard. These voices are excluded in the founding myths of both our countries: that Canada is a peaceful country that has never colonized anyone and that the United States is a democracy for all its people.

We have written this piece to open a space for readers to add resources, perspective, and context. We are appealing for suggestions to help us compile a list of resources for the NASC website.