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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

JOHNNY DEPP ON A 'HAPPINESS MISSION' IN WOUNDED KNEE

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ABSTRACT

Land remains the most fundamental of issues in Native North America, followed by those of tribal sovereignty and representation. Johnny Depp offered to buy the iconic land at Wounded Knee and gift it to the Lakota Nation. This article reflects not only upon the limitations, but more importantly upon the political implications of this approach, particularly when it is deployed as a resource for normative and material claims of Indigenous peoples in a settler-colonial society. Looking at the Wounded Knee ownership case through the lenses of postcolonial and affect theories, this article examines how the issues of Indigenous land, sovereignty and representation become linked when Oglala Lakota, as recipients of a philanthropic gift and of a happiness that is not their own, acquire a "happiness duty,"as defined by Sara Ahmed. Depp's declaration of intention can be read as another text within the colonial archive, given how it justifies intervention with the perceived unhappiness of Native culture. What, then, would it mean politically to recognize unhappiness?

Keywords: Indigeneity, Lakota, land ownership, Wounded Knee, decoloniality, happiness critique, Sara Ahmed

INTRODUCTION

Scholars from the field of Indigenous studies have stressed the importance of land and place to tribal identity and survivance (Goeman, 2008; Simpson, 2014). Land is not only a material resource but it is at the heart of the identity, longing, and belonging to Indigenous peoples. Hardly any other place in Native North America has received more attention than Wounded Knee. The massacre of mostly unarmed Lakota men, women and children, committed by the U.S. cavalry in 1890, and the occupation of the village by the American Indian Movement in 1973, as part of Native resurgence, were broadly and internationally publicized and discussed. Both historical events mark the end of two epochs, which in turn bestows them with historical and iconic significance. The massacre at Wounded Knee gained symbolic weight within U.S. national history as one in a series of "endings"–the end of the Indian Wars, the frontier, and westward expansion (Forsyth, 2003, p. 10). According to the last treaty ratified between the Lakota and the U.S. government, the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Lakota reserved themselves some of their former territory–a reservation–that covers all of what is today western South Dakota as well as parts of Nebraska, Montana, and Wyoming. However, in 1871 U.S. Congress decided to cease treaty-making and began to no longer regard Indigenous nations as international, but as internal affairs. Since then, Native Americans, their land and resources were subjugated to U.S. benevolence. Following this, U.S. Con-

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gress univocally passed acts that radically diminished the size of reservations. It is important to remember that many reservations were set up as places of containment, as a means of erasing Indigenous peoples from the landscape (Prucha, 1994; Wilkins, 2002). Subsequent federal policies regulating Indigenous life within the U.S. were continuously aimed at separating the Native from the land: assimilation, relocation, and termination. Colonial rule affects every aspect of life: blueprint constitutions for setting up tribal governments under the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), replacing the communal economic base with a system of private property, prohibition of cultural practices and Native language use, introduction of a colonial education system (primarily through boarding schools), or the writing of history. In history and school text books the Wounded Knee massacre was portrayed as a victorious battle for which the heroic U.S. cavalry was awarded medals of honor.

The actual site of the Wounded Knee massacre lies within the Pine Ridge Reservation, home to the Oglala Lakota,[2] in southwestern South Dakota. In 1973, the American Indian Movement chose this historical place to protest against the ongoing colonization, discrimination, and injustices Native Americans endured, claiming that Native lives do matter. They demanded the revision of federal Indian policies that disempowered and marginalized Native American communities and individuals, placing them on the lowest socio-economic rank in the country. In a demand for Indigenous self-determination and a re-writing of history, Native Americans and their allies occupied the village of Wounded Knee. The Lakota scholar Vine Deloria, Jr., a founder of Native American studies, had underlined that "Wounded Knee marked the first sustained modern protest by aboriginal peoples against the Western European interpretation of history" (Deloria, 1974, p. 80).

It is this very iconic piece of land, the location of the massacre site, that is currently for sale. The private owner, a non-Native inhabitant of a close-by off-reservation town, wanted to sell it for $3.9 million, a price the Oglala Lakota could not afford. Five months later, Hollywood star Johnny Depp offered to purchase the land and gift it to the tribe.

The purpose of this article is to reflect not only upon the limitations, but more importantly upon the political implications of Johnny Depp's approach, particularly when it is deployed as a resource for normative and material claims of Indigenous peoples in a settler-colonial society. My primary interpretative mode is interdisciplinary and decolonial; thus, I trace the legacies of colonial representation and, in parallel, I interpret Depp's offer through the lens of Indigeneity and its central concepts of land, sovereignty, and relationship. I investigate how Lakota agency and self-representation are affected by Johnny Depp's intervention. How do the issues of Indigenous land, sovereignty, and representation become linked when Oglala Lakota, as recipients of a philan-

2. Whenever possible I use the self-referential expression of Indigenous peoples, in this case Oglala Lakota. I prefer the term "Indigenous" over "Native American" or "American Indian" because of the implicit notion of coming from the land, which is both an accurate self-description of most Indigenous peoples' stories of origin and a political declaration about claims to the land. The concept of Indigenous also challenges the anthropological and legal preoccupation with the focus on the question of "first occupancy" or "prior occupancy." Occasionally I use "First Nation" or "Native" interchangeably with "Indigenous."

thropic gift and of a happiness that is not their own, acquire such a happiness duty? Sarah Ahmed (2010) argues that a re-evaluation of happiness may be unpopular but nonetheless may offer the appropriate language to address political grievances. I want to scrutinize what it would mean to recognize unhappiness by looking at the Wounded Knee land ownership case through Ahmed's lens of happiness critique.

The corpus analyzed consists mainly of newspaper articles reporting Depp's offer to purchase the land for the tribe. For specific information I also conducted personal interviews with Pine Ridge residents and James Czywczynski, the current owner of the land at Wounded Knee. First, I will introduce Johnny Depp's offer, followed by Lakota responses, and, finally, I will interpret Depp's approach in happiness terms in regard to self-determination and self-representation.

WOUNDED KNEE FOR SALE

The current owner of the land at Wounded Knee, James Czywczynski, was directly affected by the occupation of the village in 1973. He had bought the tract of land, store and museum in 1968 from the Gildersleeve family. Five years later, the occupation resulted in a 71-day stand-off and shooting with the FBI, leaving two individuals dead and several houses damaged. Czywczynski's store and museum were destroyed and the owner was, in effect, forced off his property. Consequently, the relationship between the Czywczynskis and the Pine Ridge community has been complicated for more than four decades. Exactly forty years after the historical occupation of Wounded Knee, in February 2013, James Czywczynski announced that he would sell the land on which the 1890 massacre took place (Harriman, 2013). He asked–and still asks–USD 3.9 million for the forty-acre tract of mainly prairie grazing land. According to Pine Ridgecounty[3] records, the property has an appraised value of USD 7,000 (Simmons-Ritchie, 2013). Thus, with hindsight it can be assumed that the selling price reflects the symbolic value of the land and the level of unhappiness the Czywczynskis experienced in Wounded Knee.

The Oglala Sioux Tribe, enjoying preemptive rights and the right of first refusal, was unable–and unwilling–to pay USD 3.9 million for the forty acres. Nation-wide media coverage condemned James Czywczynski for jacking up the price and profiting off traumatic history that occurred there. Five months later, while Johnny Depp was promoting the movie *Lone Ranger and Tonto*, the actor stated in an interview with the British newspaper *Daily Mail* that he intended to purchase the disputed piece of land and turn the title over to the Oglala Sioux Tribe (Palmer, 2013)[4]. Yet, behind the apparently generous offer, Depp's direct quotes reveal some of the problems with this intervention.

3. Formerly Shannon county, named changed to Pine Ridge county in 2015.
4. At the time of the interview, the *Lone Ranger* was estimated to be losing between USD 150 million and 200 million due to the film's USD 215 million production budget and additional USD 175 million for marketing and due to the negative reviews it earned. Many view the Wounded Knee offer solely as a public relations campaign. The film and Johnny Depp in his role as Tonto, received very negative reviews; the remake movie about a white cowboy and his Native side-kick were said to be more racist than the original series.

Johnny Depp justified his offer to purchase the land at Wounded Knee for the tribe on moral and emotional grounds: "I am doing my best to make that happen. It's the land they were pushed on to and then they were massacred there. It really saddens me." Johnny Depp was sad about a perceived injustice; in this speech act he transferred his sadness onto the reader. The reader must also feel sad about the situation and, in addition, about Depp's sadness. Depp stated his intention to get personally involved. The reader is expected to support the actor for the sake of his happiness. In a time and place where the pursuit of happiness is everybody's duty, the speech act implies that *his* sadness shall be overcome. After all, it is Depp who steps into action while the Lakota are depicted as passive victims; the active offenders and origin of the unbearable situation remain unnamed.

Depp further stated: "It's very sacred ground and many atrocities were committed against the Sioux there." This quote reveals that Depp is fairly unfamiliar with the very context he wants to get involved in. For one, the term "Sioux" is somewhat outdated, colonial, and in its origin derogatory[5]. Further, he mistakenly states that Wounded Knee is "very sacred ground." The place gained significance in the collective memory of Lakota and U.S. public through the historical events that occurred there, but it is not regarded as sacred in a spiritual sense. Referring to the 1890 massacre, the authors Chris Hedges and Joe Sacco (2012) explained why they began their mapping of the exploitative U.S.-American paradigm with the Pine Ridge Reservation: "It was here that the disease of empire and American exceptionalism took root. The belief that we [white Euro-Americans] have the divine right to resources, land, and power, and a right to displace and kill others to obtain personal and national wealth, has left in its wake a trail of ravaged landscapes and incalculable human suffering, not only in Pine Ridge but across the country and the planet" (Hedges & Sacco, 2012, p. xi). No doubt, Wounded Knee holds a distinctive place in Lakota and U.S. historiography, yet other regions and places are culturally and spiritually more important to the Lakota, such as the Black Hills, which will be described further below.

Figure 1: *The site of Wounded Knee today*
Source: Photo Sonja John, 2010.

5. The term "Sioux" is a French corruption of the Ojibway term "nadowessi" (snake, enemy) used for the antagonized neighbouring Lakota peoples.

Depp's inadequate knowledge of the history of Wounded Knee might also explain such uninformed statements as the following one: "And in the 1970s there was a stand-off between the Feds [FBI] and the people who should own that land." Depp meant the 1973 occupation but probably lacks an understanding of what the occupation was about and who was part of it. A few of the occupiers were local residents but the vast majority was Natives and non-Natives from across the U.S. and foreign countries. I doubt Depp would really argue that this diverse assembly, most of whom were first-time visitors to the Pine Ridge Reservation, constituted the rightful owners of the land at Wounded Knee. Rather, Depp probably would like to see the land title in the hand of the Oglala Lakota. Regaining land has always been a crucial part of Indigenous struggles for self-determination. However, as authors of decolonizing and Indigenous methodologies have emphasized, at the heart of engagement must first lie an understanding of the history, peoples, and cultures involved (Kovach, 2009; Smith, 2012; Wilson, 2008). They demand a reciprocal practice –respect, relationship, reciprocity–from individuals and organizations working on Indigenous issues, be it researchers, journalists, museologists or charities. When an understanding of the topic, situation and context is achieved, prior informed consent of the respective people should be gained before getting engaged and active. Hence, Johnny Depp's offer surely would have had a different impact, had he first asked the Lakota about their opinions, agenda, and goals before informing the media of his proposal.

LAND AS A NATIONAL BASIS

Not only does Depp lack an understanding of the history of Wounded Knee, but he largely ignores the aims, ambitions, and methods of settler colonialism. Thus, he stated: "This historical land is so important to the Sioux culture and all I want to do is buy it and give it back. Why doesn't the government do that?" Well, symbolic value and real material value are at stake here. I will look first at the symbolic investment before turning to the aspect of land ownership in a settler-colonial setting. Any memorializing of colonial legacies or reconciliation projects are deeply embedded in a capitalist economic system wherein ownership of property and resources is mapped onto the annexation of land from Indigenous peoples, who continuously seek to carve self-determination from the federalist system of government. The hegemonic *white*[6] U.S. can never fully remember colonialism because of its economic, political, and geographical proximity to, and implication in, the continuing legacies of colonialism. It is in this "paradoxical space between the inability to forget and the inability to remember" (Lozanski, 2007, p. 224) that the iconic status of Wounded Knee can call *whiteness* as the hegemonic identity of the U.S. into crisis. *Whiteness* is synonymous with colonialism insomuch as the liberal, bourgeois, propertied self is literally founded upon Indigeneity: "there could be no 'America' without this genocide" (Smith, 2007, p. 104). While the U.S. take pride in national achievements, such as that for the "victory" of the cavalry at Wounded Knee, they have not yet embraced the task of nation-building through common shame for national wrongdoings, such as its treatment of non-white citizens. Acknowledging wrongs at Wounded Knee would mean recognizing and coming to terms with U.S. imperialistic and genocidal history.

6. *White* here is to be understood as a political definition, which represents historical, political and social privileges of a certain group that has access to dominant structures and institutions of society.

The intimate link between racial discourses and colonial discourses reveals itself in the dispossession and "desire" of Indigenous land. The settling of the continent with white bodies was achieved through the extermination of brown bodies. The sentiment of the average settler at the time of the massacre is captured in a statement from 1890 by L. Frank Baum (the renowned author of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*), while he was editor for the *Aberdeen South Dakota Saturday Pioneer*. Commenting on the massacre, he wrote in an editorial: "The Pioneer had before declared that our only safety depends upon the total extermination of the Indian. Having wronged them for centuries, we had better, in order to protect our civilization, follow it up with one more wrong and wipe these untamed and untamable creatures from the face of the earth" (cited in Gonzalez/Cook-Lynn, 1999, p. 88). The dispossession of land is linked to the violence done to Indigenous bodies–particularly in Wounded Knee.

In 1990, on occasion of the centennial memorializing of the massacre, the Wounded Knee Survivors Associations requested that the U.S. Congress make a formal apology. Yet, all that the Congress was able to articulate was a simple "regret" (Forsyth, 2003, p. 17). With such declaration of regret the Congress carefully avoided the performative of a state apology, a speech act that could be used as grounds for reparative claims and that could turn the recognition of the past harms into the redistribution of present economic goods. Recognizing that the land at Wounded Knee should be in Lakota ownership would set a precedent resulting in hundreds of legal land claims that could threaten the very material basis of the nation.

Depp completely failed to address or at least consider how colonial spatial restructuring of land through colonial, imperial, and neocolonial policies have affected land ownership in Pine Ridge. Native land is continuously in danger of theft by empires and nation-states that seek to conquer, dominate and control it. So before asking the U.S. government to return the land at Wounded Knee to the Oglala Lakota, Depp could have asked how James Czywczynski could have become the owner of such a meaningful and historical piece of land. This requires looking beyond a single property case to colonial policies that subjugated Native American land, bodies, and resources under colonial rule. After the General Allotment Act (1887) took effect in Pine Ridge and the collective landholding was broken up, the parcel of land at Wounded Knee passed into private ownership. U.S. president Theodore Roosevelt summarized the intention of passing the Allotment Act profoundly, "a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass" (cited in Wilkins, 2002, p. 111). In 1930 the Lakota owners Mattie and Lois Good Medicine sold their land at Wounded Knee for $1,000 to the Gildersleeves who owned and operated a store. In 1968 the Gildersleeves sold the property to the Czywczynskis. James Czywczynski was (doubtingly) cited stating that he had paid $750,000 for the site and another 40 acre tract close by (Schilling, 2013). While it is manifest that the current selling price of $3.9 million considerably exceeds the fair market value for grazing land, James Czywczynski is the rightful owner of this piece of land and therefore he enjoys every freedom under U.S. law to impose the desired price.

Since the land in Wounded Knee is privately owned, the U.S. government has little to no jurisdiction over the land. What the government could do is what Indigenous advocates of national sovereignty have been mandating long before 1973–honor the treaties and reconstruct the government-to-government rela-

tionship. Considering the probability of the Cobell settlement, the Salazar settlement, and the federal land buy-back program, all of which allowed for compensation to Native nations and individuals in the past two years–has there ever been a more favorable climate to negotiate reimbursement and repatriation than under the current Obama administration? The text of the election campaign in 2008 for the reelection of President Obama stated, "Barack Obama is a strong believer in tribal sovereignty." Further it affirmed that Obama would not be opposed to bringing together all the different parties through government-to-government negotiations to explore innovative solutions to the long-standing issue of the Black Hills land case, holding out the prospect of returning federal lands (cited in Gonzalez, 2008).

TRIBAL SELF-DETERMINATION

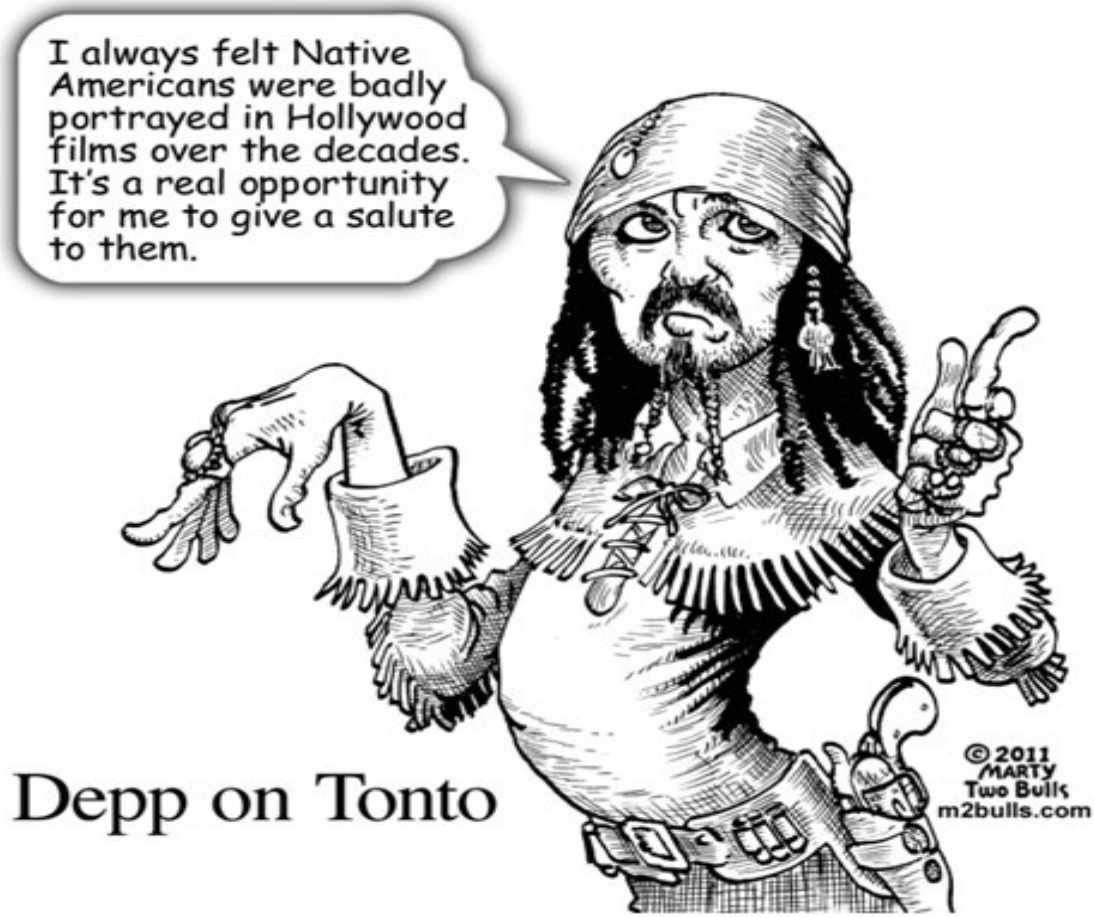

Figure 1: *Johnny Depp caricature by Marty Two Bulls*
Source: copyright by Marty Two Bulls.

After it became known that the land at Wounded Knee was for sale on the market in February 2013, tribal members and the tribal government were considering different political and legal solutions. The then tribal president Bryan Brewer proposed to reclaim the tract of land by declaring it eminent domain (Schilling, 2013). Eminent domain allows the government to take private property for the good of the public in return for reasonable compensation. Another option discussed was to follow the example of the initiative led by the Sicangu

Lakota from the neighboring Rosebud Reservation that managed to raise $9 million to buy back sacred land on the Pesla hilltop in the Black Hills. The debate over the Wounded Knee case initiated further meetings of (formal as well as traditional) Lakota leaders addressing treaty rights in regards to the Black Hills and brought the treaty groups back to the table debating land rights and Obama's invitation to enter into government-to-government negotiations. Treaty groups reminded that under international law and the U.S. constitution, the 1868 Fort Laramie Treaty should have binding force and safeguard land titles far beyond the forty acres at Wounded Knee. Of course, re-establishing government-to-government relations takes time. The fact that by July 2013 the tribe had not yet purchased the land seems to have led Depp to assume the Lakota lack agency and capability to address this issue themselves. Once the Hollywood star announced he wants to buy the land for the tribe, previously held conversations about treaty rights and political options to solve the problem ceased.

Figure 2: *Johnny Depp caricature by Marty Two Bulls*
Source: copyright by Marty Two Bulls.

Because of its symbolic and historical weight, the representations, narrations, and interpretations of Wounded Knee carry meaning not only for the engaged Oglala Lakota but for Native America as a whole. Consequently, Depp's announcement resulted in nation-wide media coverage (Palmer, 2013). To foreclose, in an interview conducted earlier this year, the Czywczynskis clarified that they never received any concrete or direct offer from Johnny Depp or his agents; that Johnny Depp never confirmed to them his interest or intention to purchase the tract of land; and that no negotiations involving the land sale were underway[7]. This did not hinder the media to keep the story up. A year later, a South Dakota regional TV station cited then tribal president Bryan Brewer stating that Johnny Depp's agents confirmed interest in the transaction (KSFY, 2014).

7. Telephone and email interview, March 3, 2015.

While there was some public excitement about the possibility that the Hollywood star might come to Pine Ridge[8] and that the money to purchase the land might be available, not everybody was so thrilled. Some Lakota–who have long argued for the repossession of this historic and symbolic tract of land–were not happy with Depp's offer. Depp's purchase of the land would be an easy solution for the tribe, tribal member Dawn Moves Camp said, it would also be dehumanizing. "It's also buying into the idea that our ancestry and history have a price tag on them," she said in an interview with the *Lakota Country Times* (2013), adding: "We have pride too. We'd rather it be done in an honorable way. I hope our tribe finds some way to buy the land back without outside help". Yet, once Depp's offer to purchase the land for the tribe had been made, any political means to regain the land at Wounded Knee were automatically off the table; the actor Johnny Depp became the center of attention in Native and U.S. media covering this story. The media cited Depp stating that all he wants "to do is buy it and give it back." Posting this very simple solution–for someone who can spare $3.9 million–to correct an injustice his government has allegedly committed, he portrayed the Lakota as incapable and himself as capable, the Lakota as inactive and himself as active, the Lakota as victims and himself as the savior.

Figure 3: *Johnny Depp caricature by Marty Two Bulls*
Source: copyright by Marty Two Bulls.

DECOLONIZING CONCEPTS OF PROPERTY

Necessary to decolonization is reclaiming land physically as well as ideologically. The occupation of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement in 1973 did not only put Indigenous bodies on the land at Wounded Knee, they also challenged hegemonic historiographies that legitimize the extermination of the Native and the expropriation of Indigenous land and resources. Property,

8. Locally, the rumor spread that Johnny Depp will come to Pine Ridge during the annual Oglala Lakota Nation powwow to talk to the tribal president Bryan Brewer. As a result, Brewer complained that his phone rang off the hook; people were non-stop asking him where they could meet Depp and if he could pass on their number to the Hollywood star.

as it has been argued by Indigenous scholars and their allies, is distinctly a European notion that locks together labor, land, and conquest. The mapping of land in colonial history was largely done with the intent to claim land and make it readable as property. The process of making land rights visible to the colonizer, however, involves working with these concepts of property; concepts which are, according to Indigenous scholar Dale Turner (2006, p. 24), "the cornerstone not only of liberal theories of justice but also of Western European economies." Hence, in addressing colonial constructions of space it is necessary to address the notion of property and territory not just as material places, but also as discursive constructions.

The problem with buying land and gifting it is that it reinforces colonial authority over Indigenous land by keeping it reified and fetishized within a settler colonial approach to land ownership–in effect sustaining settler colonialism (Goeman, 2008). This serves to reinforce asymmetrical power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It sets Lakota people up in a never-ending battle for recognition within that system; a system installed for the colonizers' primary intention to separate the Native from the land and to legitimize settler colonial authority over Indigenous peoples, their lands and resources.

As Robert Nichols has pointed out regarding social contract theories in relation to conceptions of Indigeneity, very often it is the case that "Indigenous peoples do not merely claim *ownership* of a piece of land, but rather they claim *sovereignty* over the legal, political and, indeed (...) philosophical area of adjudication" (Nichols, 2013, p. 11; emphasis as in original). Autonomy over land, however, is not just a matter of land ownership; rather the struggle for autonomy is about self-determining how communities are made and function. In the Indigenous context, land invokes responsibility, rights, sovereignty, and belonging.

Maintaining relationships to the land is at the heart of Indigenous peoples' struggles. Lakota people have challenged land seizures within the U.S. legal system. In case of the Black Hills, after several decades and numerous attempts to have the case considered in court, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that the taking of the land violated the 1868 Fort Laramie treaty provisions and ordered that compensation be paid (Biolsi, 1993, p. 23). To date, the Lakota have refused to accept compensation for this land seizure; they want their land back. Although Lakota have entered legal discourses for political struggles, they have resisted looking for legitimacy solely within the colonizer's legal system and continue to recognize their relationship to the land on their own merits and on their own terms. They make place by relating both personal and communal experiences and histories to certain locations and landscapes–maintaining these spatial relationships is one of the most important components of identity, sovereignty and epistemologies. By far the greatest threat to Indigenous knowledge systems is land dispossession. Land based educators actively protecting nationhood are currently traveling to contested territories and use their physical presence and connection to the place as teaching method (Simpson, 2014, p. 21). Commemoration of and education about historical events at Wounded Knee involve Lakota people being on the land. Years before Johnny Depp played his humanitarian role, the Wounded Knee district had passed a resolution to prevent commercial enterprises within a one-mile

perimeter of the site in order to preserve the location as an accessible and non-commercial public area. In the Wounded Knee case this claiming of land through presence is practicable since the place is on the reservation and under tribal jurisdiction. Many other locations on annexed land have been transferred into settler's private property and are fenced-in. First Nations people run the risk of getting caught up in armed confrontations when trying to maintain relationships with their (ancestral) territories.

RECOGNIZING UNHAPPINESS

Recognizing that the land at Wounded Knee should be in Lakota ownership would not only result in land claims that could threaten the national material basis but also the validity of the U.S. creation myth as a virgin land (H. Smith, 1972). Native Americans are a significant factor in settler-colonial myths and creation stories. Rather than define themselves in relation to the land they lived on, the definition of US-American became entrapped in producing abstractions of difference: the civilized settler cultivating the land versus the (noble) savages roaming the wilderness. Historical and spatialized practices have "placed" the Native in a certain time frame and imaginative spaces of Indigenous "traditions." Today, Indigenous peoples are called upon to perform authentic difference and "traditions" in exchange for the good feeling of the nation (Povinelli, 2002, p. 6). In the U.S., whiteness operates alongside, and in tension with, multicultural "others." These racialized cultural "others"–both ethnic minorities and Indigenous peoples–are called upon to perform official multiculturalism as an indicator of US-American benevolence as well as to be the recipients of tolerance. At the same time, they are denied agency and subjectivity (Bannerji 2000; Povinelli, 2002). Slavoj Žižek (2010) has elaborated on the connections of multiculturalism and the notion of tolerance as an ideological system that tends to nullify political contestation. As beneficiaries of Depp's generosity, the Lakota are expected to accept this forced gift in exchange for the good feeling of Johnny Depp and the nation he represents. Elaborations into the economy of gifts have established that a gift places responsibilities on the recipient and tends to perpetuate asymmetries and social hierarchies (Osteen, 2002). There is no such thing as a free gift, Pierre Bourdieu (1997, p. 197) has affirmed.

Depp's move has several effects, the first and most obvious implication being that actual dialogue with Indigenous peoples is secondary and, ultimately unnecessary to comprehend and adjudicate land disputes. By tacitly asserting that money can solve legal disputes and land claims, such attempts effectively render silent the rich diversity of Lakota self-understandings and justifications for their occupancy and/or relationship to the land in questions. To paraphrase Elizabeth Povinelli (2002, p. 56), the social consequences of Johnny Depp acquiring the land title for Wounded Knee for the Lakota is quite different from the consequences of Lakota people doing the same.

Hence, Depp's offer can be read as another text within the unhappy colonial archive, insofar as it constitutes the misery of Native culture as justification of interventions. I argue that Johnny Depp in his interview not only constitutes the Lakota "other" as an object in need of his assistance, a victim in need of his "help," but moreover as being unhappy. By gifting the land title to the tribe,

he promises to bring happiness to the Lakota. Can the Lakota react to Depp's offer any differently than by expressing happiness and appreciation?

Depp was not the first trying to "help" and "save" the Lakota. Various Christian denominations have sent their missionaries to bring a "better" life to the Natives, convincing them to change the way they pray, the way they work, the way they marry, the way they live. The stream of philanthropists, religious factions, and charity groups has not dried up since. Depp's language of saving and helping the "other" converts swiftly into very similar missionary language; as giving to others, who in being recipients of help have to be thankful; who, in being recipients of a happiness that is not their own, acquire a happiness duty. Sarah Ahmed (2010, p. 158) explains, "[t]he happiness duty is a positive duty to speak of what is good but can also be thought of as a negative duty not to speak of what is not good, not to speak from out of unhappiness." Since the white savior just wants to help the Native become happy, the offer becomes a gift that cannot be refused, a forced gift. As such, happiness is applied as a "technology of cultivation" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 81). The giver has certain ideas, understandings, and interests that he cultivates through the intervention of giving the gift (Yan, 2012).

In Ethiopia cases of charity work and band aid have elicited similar critique for the unacknowledged effects of the neocolonial gifts in political-economic realms (Müller, 2013). Especially the involvement of celebrities has a long and influential tradition (De Waal, 2008). The message spread throughout by the media has been: Ethiopia needs your help and will be happy because of you. The work of the countless charity organizations collecting for and on behalf of Ethiopia is based on perpetuating the stereotype of a country of starving children. Monetary gifts and donations under the mantle of humanitarian care tend to preclude reflection on the root causes of the inequities it purports to fight. Many interventions foster dependency if they are not a component of a reciprocal partnership aimed at sustainable development.

With his urge to get over the unhappiness of Wounded Knee being owned by a non-Native, Depp affectively energizes and animates "overing" tendencies, thus, avoiding some reflection in the more complex political context, that is, in treaty rights, federal American Indian policies, and contemporary land rights. Ahmed's theorizing of happiness offers a ground and the language for critically regarding reconciliation. She warns that to recover can too easily lead to covering over pain and suffering: "The desire to move beyond suffering in reconciliation, the very will to 'be over it' by asking others to 'get over it,' means that those who persist in their unhappiness become causes of the unhappiness of many" (Ahmed, 2010, p. 216). Ahmed suggests thinking about unhappiness as more than a feeling that should be overcome. Historical forms of injustice did not disappear, these histories persist. To let go of the unhappiness with these injustices and histories would mean to let go of their political memory. Thus, unhappiness might offer a pedagogic lesson of the limits of happiness. Ahmed's critique of happiness, I argue, can serve as a constructive and appropriate language for land disputes like the Wounded Knee case as well as for other reconciliation attempts. To bring about change and to address injustices usually involves going to unhappy places. To recognize unhappiness within a particular situation also opens up the opportunity to look at its complexity, to discuss, reconcile, and negotiate political solutions.

Despite Johnny Depp's willingness to help the Oglala Lakota regain both title and control over the massacre site in Wounded Knee, he did not express any kind of solidarity on common ground with the Oglala Lakota people and understood as a reciprocal practice[9]. In effect, Depp's action takes agency and the possibility of solving this political and legal issue on a political and/or legal basis. Hence, this intervention has effects in political, cultural, and economic dimensions for the Lakota community. By translating Indigenous claims into claims to property, not about the very nature of sovereignty and the history of land seizures, Depp implicitly establishes that whatever the Indigenous claimsare, they can be solved by charitable donations. However, deconstructing the discourse of property and reformulating the political vitality of Indigenous land requires taking serious First Nations' aspirations, histories, and apprehensions. If sympathizers and allies are concerned about not only protecting and maintaining Indigenous landownership, but revitalizing it on Indigenous terms as a form of restitution for its historic and contemporary role as a colonizing force, then they must make conscious decisions to become a decolonizing force by dismantling settler colonialism and actively protecting land as the very source of Indigenous identity, epistemology, and nationhood (Goeman 2008; Simpson, 2014).

What, then, would it mean politically to recognize unhappiness? Recognizing unhappiness, as Chantal Mouffe (2005) and Sarah Ahmed (2014) have argued with the character of the killjoy, is a form of resistance. Withdrawing the "happiness" for monetary and material offers in favor of a resurgence of Indigenous intellectual and legal systems and a reclamation of the context within which those systems operate, goes much further than propelling nationhood and re-establishing Indigenous political systems because it offers the opportunity to link Indigenous people to the land in a context that is conductive to Native renaissance.

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9. For decolonial research ethics see Decoloniality Europe (2013) and Kovach (2009).

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