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Transracial and Transnational Adoption: A Migratory System of State Building through the Reproduction of Whiteness

Isabel Ruelas

Introduction

Families are the markers of national identity, the sites of the production of ethnic cultural practices, and a mode of citizen making. “The nation asserts its priority, and through the state and citizenship, exerts its legal and bureaucratic pressures on the family, using... kinship metaphors to justify itself” (Smith 1991:79). It is through the regulation of the family that the state is able to exude control over its people by giving rise to the false idea of a “proper family.” It is through this idea of “properness,” which in the United States becomes a synonym for whiteness, that the state decides who is - a white child- and who aren’t worth protecting- Indigenous children, children of color, and immigrant children. This myth of abandoned children from immigrants of color and Indigenous folk is fueling white sentiment to come in and “save” these nonwhite children through adoption when in fact the demand that these white families are creating gives rise to an opportunity for the state to reproduce its values of whiteness within familial bonds.

Immigrants may at first seem irrelevant to conversations regarding Indigenous struggle. They assume the benefits of being non-Indigenous, but some also carry the burden of non-citizenship and immigrants of color experience the reality of non-whiteness. Examination from a historical perspective, however, reveals how relationships between Indigenous people and immigrants was a major factor in the formation of the modern nation-state, especially in regards to how we incorporate immigrants into today’s societies. The United States’ ideas about citizenship developed from its history of conquering Indigenous land, subjugating Indigenous people, enslaving Africans, and assimilating white immigrants (Castles & Miller 2014: 265). Thus, though they occupy immensely different relationships to the land, both Indigenous

people and immigrants are deeply tied to national notions of citizenship.

Incorporation of white immigrants as citizens led to the idea of the United States as a nation of immigrants, but this myth requires the continuous disappearance of Indigenous people as “a permanent ‘present absence’ in the US colonial imagination”(Smith 2005: 9). The “melting pot” myth meant that differing identities of whiteness could belong to the national identity through civic belonging (Castles & Miller 2014: 265-266). It is important to note that racially selective immigration laws such as the Chinese Exclusion Act and Indian removal policies and the responding acts of resistances to such laws prevented nonwhites from successfully assimilating (National Congress of American Indians 2011:3). Through the breakdown of racially selective immigration laws, the signing of Indigenous treaties that exchanged large areas of land for the right of self-governance (National Congress of American Indians 2011:3), and the survival of cultural distinctiveness by immigrant communities of color, came a governmental shift to integration. This incorporation into dominant society of both immigrants of color and Indigenous people, however, was assimilation by another name.

Today the myth of multiculturalism operates by incorporating immigrants and respecting Indigenous sovereignty to justify colorblind policies, which is then used to successfully reproduce whiteness within brown bodies as a humanitarian deed. Multiculturalism means that immigrants of color and Indigenous folk are supposed to be “able to participate as equals in all spheres of society, without being expected to give up their own culture, religion and language”(Castles & Miller 2014: 270). For Native Americans, treaties, laws and policies such as the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 and the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act

of 1975 are meant to ensure their governmental sovereignty and cultural distinctiveness, but these documents continue to be violated by the United States government (National Congress of American Indians 2011:3). Fears about security and national identity in the form of concerns over the prosperity and reproduction of whiteness has caused rising xenophobia to be institutionalized through policies such as Arizona's Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, SB-1070.

Immigrants challenge the nation-state by having a relationship to more than one state. This undermines any nationalist ideal of cultural homogeneity, which in the United States is the supremacy of whiteness (Castles & Miller 2014: 67). Indigenous people also undermine this desire of homogeneity because Indian Nations are sovereign governments whose existences challenge the legitimacy of the United States as a nation-state and serve as reminders to its imperial and colonial roots. In attempts to define itself, the United States has excluded and tried to assimilate Indigenous people, people of color, and immigrants. Though we often think of Indigenous people and immigrants as the opposite of one another, there are many signifiers that they have in common that would signify both an Indigenous person and an immigrant. The origins of racist stereotypes directed towards immigrant populations lie in the historical treatment of the colonized Native (Castles & Miller 2014: 67).

I examine how the state uses migratory systems, which the national tendency is to associate with immigrants and to see Native people as static, to control these separate groups in particular ways. The migratory process that I am examining is adoption. I argue that the state uses adoption as a mechanism to pathologize nonwhite bodies that simultaneously justifies the reproduction of whiteness while alleviating the state of its duty to provide the welfare policies that could keep families of color together.

I will demonstrate how adoption works as an extension of the deportation process and as a

validation to diminish Indigenous sovereignty through two cases: *Adoptive Parents v. Baby Girl* and the deportation of Felipe Montes. This examination challenges the notion that the removal of Indigenous children and children of immigrants of color contribute to child welfare. The justification of the naturalization of white bodies caring for nonwhite children has morphed adoption into working against the rights of the child.

Literature Review

The conceptualization of adoption as a form of migration for children was first termed the "quiet migration" in 1984 by the scholar Richard H. Weil. Weil believed the lack of scholarship around adoption was due to its recent emergence as a global phenomenon with roots dating back to the 1940s for the United States (Weil 1984: 276). The work of Mark C. Jerng traces the practice of transracial and transnational interactions back to the early nineteenth century and highlights how understanding the bond between parent and child speaks to larger questions of history and identity between different races in the United States (Jerng 2010). Adoption as an area of research has primarily focused on how family is redefined by child adoption, but how the practice is extending beyond the private sphere because of public concern is transforming the current direction of adoption literature. In *Babies without Borders*, Karen Dubinsky complicates the limiting framework of the kidnap and rescue binary to reveal historically grounded apprehensions around nationhood through case studies of the "national" children of the Operation Peter Pan in Cuba, the "disappearing" children in Guatemala, and the "hybrid" children in Canada (Dubinsky 2010).

This essay fits into the expanding literature of how the movement of children within borders is a project of state building, but I want to complicate this narrative by examining how the prevention of the movement of children across national and sovereign borders is also a tool of state building. My analysis is part of a larger project expanding

upon the work of Andrea Smith. Literature that names and complicates white supremacy's relationship with different communities of color and Indigenous folk particularly in terms of how people of color can benefit from the oppression of other people of color is being produced within the interdisciplinary field of American Studies (Smith 2006:73). I want to examine how the state utilizes different processes, in this case adoption, to reproduce a white citizenry that causes immigrants to benefit from the ongoing colonization of Indigenous people, but also requires the sacrifice of the immigrant's culture in order to assimilate into whiteness. I am interested in how our thinking of Indigenous and immigrant relations allows for the reproduction of whiteness to persist? I am also interested in how solidarity between Indigenous people and immigrants can act not only as resistance to the state, but directly challenge its ideologies of whiteness.

Background: A History of "Rescue"

Transracial and transnational adoption possess a history that can be traced back to the formation of the U.S. nation-state. Personhood as defined by the Eurocentric notion of birth to self-identity was challenged by Indigenous adoption practices based on substitution. White children would sometimes be abducted by Indigenous people to act as replacements for an Indigenous child that had died. Recorded interactions between these "unredeemed captives" and the white societies that they were taken from reveal the anxiety produced by colonizers as they witnessed white bodies reproducing nonwhite practices and ideologies. The threat is that the adoptee is able to learn and transmit any national or racial characteristics without the loyalty to their "biological" culture interfering (Jerng 2010:20-21).

Since the adoptee was able to fully emerge into the adoptive society, they were able to gain recognized status, but the racial history of the United States prevents this kind of approach. It does so because it would allow whiteness to not be held accountable for its ongoing legacy of

white supremacy and colonization. Further, in order for full status to be gained, the society needs to recognize the adoptee as belonging to them whereas in current transracial adoption there is a narrative of "as if" kinship (Jerng 2010:7). Loving a child "as if" they were biological. This "as if" bond is more productive for the state's goal of reproducing white ideology while still maintaining a divide between white parents and their adopted nonwhite child. Our society feeds into the illusion that love alone is able to bridge this contemporary and historical division created by hierarchical understandings of race and culture. However, there is historical evidence, for both Indigenous and immigrant families, of the state exploiting this bond to serve political and economical ends.

Beginning in the 19th century, an estimated 200,000 predominantly children of impoverished immigrants boarded orphan trains to work on farms and in rural communities in Western states. During each checkpoint on the routes of the orphan trains, children were divided into those who were chosen for adoption and those who would continue on to the next checkpoint to repeat the selection process. In many instances, the parents temporarily gave up their child until their economic circumstances improved, so that they could resume custody, but for some the bond was permanently severed. The orphan trains came about as solutions to the influx of immigrants and broader economic troubles (Trammell 2009:3-4).

A new reform movement towards the end of the nineteenth century acknowledged that the "Indian Problem" could not be solved with militaristic policies, but that Natives could become equal to whites if they were given the opportunity to assimilate. At the end of the 19th century, over 10,000 Native American children were removed from their reservations to be educated in boarding schools. Native children were educated in trade and domestic work, which meant that when they entered the workforce, they would only be able to join the bottom of the social scale. Thus even with the promises of the democratic possibility of

assimilation, they would not be able to be on the same levels as whites (Jerng 2010:27).

The Impact of a Colonial Heritage: Adoption as a Threat to Indigenous Sovereignty

On September 23, 2013, Dusten Brown, an Army veteran and enrolled member of the Cherokee Nation, gave up his daughter, Veronica, to Matt and Melanie Capobianco, a white couple from South Carolina who had raised her for the first two years of her life while her father was deployed in Iraq. This ended a nearly five-year custody battle. In December 2011, Brown gained custody of four-year-old Veronica, after a South Carolina court ruled that the adoption process had violated the federal Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 (ICWA). The case made its way to the U.S. Supreme Court as *Adoptive Parents v. Baby Girl*. At the time of the case, the Capobiancos had yet to formally adopt Veronica. In their ruling, the justices declared that ICWA didn't apply to Veronica's adoption. They returned the case to the lower courts. Within a month, a South Carolina court finalized the Capobiancos adoption of Veronica and demanded that she be returned to them. Brown's and the Cherokee Nation's lawyers tried, without success, to secure a hearing in tribal courts (Joyce 2014).

During the course of the case, it was argued that Veronica's rights to equal protection had been violated by ICWA because the statute itself was unconstitutional. Enacted in 1978, ICWA is intended to help keep Native children within their families by regulating child-custody procedures for children who are eligible to be registered members of Federally recognized tribes. The act was created in response to Native American activist denouncing the high rates of white parents adopting Native children in the 1950s and 1960s as a product of genocide. (Bogado: 2013). The high rates were because of the Indian Adoption Project, which replaced the boarding schools project in the United States as the main institutional medium between whites and Indigenous people. One-quarter to one-third of Native children were

removed from their homes and families. Of this number, 85-90 percent of the children were placed in foster care or with adoptive, non-Native families.

The adoptions effectively severed the relationships between the Native children and their communities, which without children to continue on Native practices and epistemologies, the very existences of entire sovereign nations were threatened. ICWA, in reaction to the Indian Adoption Project, sought to stem that practice by creating a policy that made it difficult for Native American children to be adopted by non-native people because it prioritizes the extended family and nations of the child. ICWA affirms Native American sovereignty and holds the state accountable to the history the act was designed to address (Joyce 2014). "For American Indians, the extended family is the primary means by which their culture is maintained and developed..It was recognized that there exists no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children," (Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978, 25 U.S.C. § 1901(3)).

After the Supreme Court issued its verdict, Christina Maldonado who is Latina and the biological mother of Veronica, signed onto a lawsuit against the Federal government and the Cherokee Nation, on the grounds that ICWA is unconstitutional because it gives racial preference to Natives. The suit argued that non-Indian mothers of Native children shouldn't have their choices limited by ICWA's provisions especially when there is only a slight connection to the child's Indigenous heritage (Joyce 2014). In the opening line of the Supreme Court's verdict we can see the same logic influencing the justices' ultimate decision. "This case is about a little girl who is classified as an Indian because she is 1.2% (3/256) Cherokee (Bogado: 2013)."

The case and following suit were greatly influenced by the colonial practice of blood quantum. The Cherokee Nation has no minimum blood quantum requirements and thus does not see Veronica as 1.2% Cherokee. As determined by her nation she is Cherokee. White heteronormative

constructions of race as biological enabled the justices to be influenced by racial claims rather than tribal citizenship, which positioned Veronica as not being Cherokee enough. “It is through relationship with family, elders, tribal community, and culture that the Indian child's sense of permanence and identity is protected” (25 U.S.C. § 1901 et seq). Culture is often mistakenly seen as something that is transmitted through the body, but this logic can be traced back to the foundation of white supremacy. Culture is not something that is inherent, but rather is learned. Thus it is through children that a culture is maintained and transmitted.

Since the arrival of the European colonizers into the Western hemisphere, Indigenous culture has been devalued and European traditions have been forced upon under the guise of ongoing projects of annihilation and humanitarian rescues. There is a liberal discourse of multiculturalism that celebrates adoptees as bridges between nations, “symbols of interethnic harmony, and embodiment of postmodern cosmopolitanism (Dissident Voice 2014).” Veronica was first taken by the white couple at birth, so how is she meant to be a symbol of intercultural exchange when her previous culture will soon be replaced by Westernized practices and ideologies? Unless Veronica’s adopted family actively undergoes attempts at preserving her Indigenous identity, then culturally she will become white. Yet, her skin tone physically marks her as being nonwhite, so she will be denied access to certain elements of white privilege. White privilege should not be expanded to include bodies of people of color, but rather some unearned gains should become universal for all to access, while others that confer dominance should become obsolete (McIntosh 1988).

The adoptive mother of Veronica commented, “We beat the Cherokee Nation (Daniels 2013).” Her words demonstrate the ongoing Western ideology of superiority over Indigenous nations. The statement is rooted in a white, colonial perspective of possession versus

belonging. Her words translate the message that white parents being in possession of an Indigenous child is the best interest of the child and that they won out over the best interests of the tribe. To make such a statement is to assume that the interest of the child and of the tribe are mutually exclusive rather than linked. It implies that Veronica is better off with her new white family than she would have been if an alternative route was found for her to remain with the Cherokee Nation—which would have been the case if the ICWA had been adhered to in the first place. The tribe never gave consent for Veronica to leave Oklahoma. With the events that lead to the formation of the Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 in mind, perhaps instead of questioning the constitutionality of the ICWA the focus should be shifted toward better support and compliance with ICWA guidelines from both the justice system and potential adoptive parents.

Adoption as a Symbol of Border Control

Child welfare policy states that the child’s family should receive priority in obtaining custody, but Child Protective Services (CPS) does not place children with their undocumented, non-custodial parents or other family members. Ignoring other relatives as viable caretakers by CPS leaves the child in foster care or allows the child to become eligible for adoption, thus permanently severing the legal pathway for reunification (Wessler 2011:7). An example of this is the deportation of Felipe Montes. He was separated from his three children in 2010 after having been deported to Mexico from his home in Sparta, North Carolina. After his deportation, the state deemed his wife, who has a mental disability, unfit to care for her children. Two-thirds of states violate the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by framing disability as grounds for removing a child and terminating parental rights. This state sanctioned ableism is fueled by stereotypes of violence and dependency and contributes to the 80% child removal rate of parents with psychiatric or intellectual disabilities (Rochman 2012).

Several families were interested in adopting the children after they were placed into foster care. Montes asked county child welfare officials to send his children to Tamaulipas, Mexico to be with him, but they refused arguing that his home lacked running water and wasn't safe for children. During the court case, Montes was painted as a criminal because of his undocumented status. Social workers involved in the case attempted to use reports of neglect that were obtained after he had been deported to speak to Montes inability to care for his children. Judge Duncan ruled that since there were no reports of neglect before the father's deportation that the children should be reunited with their father (Wessler 2013). In this case, the family was reunited. Media outlets such as *Colorlines* helped to spread public outrage and empathy towards Montes's case. Those families whose stories didn't garner the same media attention lost their children to adoption.

The United States positions itself as a democracy to render its status as a settler-colonial state invisible. To construct its nationalism the United States situates itself as a "... a dutiful yet impersonal servant, protecting, its 'people' ...and provisioning them with the Rule of Law in return for entrusting the state with the [people's] sovereignty..."(De Genova & Peutz 2010:53). Thus the act of adopting out a child of deported parents reinforces the state's desire for authenticity as a sovereign power within an Indigenous territorial space. Physically removing undocumented people reinforces the state's boundary claims and adoption reproduces the desired white citizenry since adoptive parents are on average a white, heterosexual couple of financial means (Dubinsky 2010:89). This family reflects the type of family the state wants to reproduce. When the child is of a different ethnicity this positions the United States as invested in multiculturalism, despite the fact that most adopted children lose their cultures if their white adoptive families don't know how to preserve or embrace a nonwhite culture. The body of a brown, adopted child signifies an otherness

that promotes the illusion of a culturally diverse family when white culture is being reproduced.

At the intersection of immigration law and child welfare policies is the basic human right to respect the family unit (International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, Article 23, Section). Both of these government bodies are supposed to ensure that the family stays intact, but immigration detention and deportation effectively render the family and by extension their culture as delegitimate and undesirable through exclusion.

In 2011, an estimated 5,100 of children in foster care had detained or deported parents (Wessler 2013:4). With no aid from the US government to get sufficient representation within immigration court, the parents must navigate the system alone, while overcoming bureaucratic and institutionalized obstacles such as communication barriers between the varying entities within CPS and the lack of CPS policy advocating for reunification. The difficulty of a parent navigating the system speaks to deportation and immigration being a matter of the civil court instead of the criminal court, which absolves the state from worrying about civil rights, paying the legal fees of an attorney, or due process for undocumented immigrants (Oboler 2009:49).

With changing immigration enforcement, older forms of immigration policies are no longer applicable to present changes including the utilization of local police and jails to detain noncitizens (Wessler 2013:6). Expansion of the Secure Communities, which allows ICE access to data on every person booked in county jail, has resulted in ICE becoming involved with undocumented parents for matters that wouldn't separate a citizen parent from their child, but could lead to the undocumented parent's deportation. A report gauging the relationship of immigration enforcement and the Child Welfare System called *Shattered Families* estimates that 15,000 more children are expected to be shuffled into the foster care system in the next five years (2011). ICE has repeatedly claimed that parents are able to determine the fate of their children if they are

deported, but the information gathered in the *Shattered Families* investigation challenges such claims, in large part due to outdated ICE guidelines.

These obsolete guidelines have failed to accommodate ICE's shift from high-profile raids to small-scale operations that are targeting individuals. The Immigration and Nationality Act made it so that a felony charge would result in the removal of a noncitizen individual after the events of September 11, 2001 aggravated anxieties around national security. Fear can lead to questions of the state's legitimacy and effectiveness. Thus to reassert its power and appease apprehensions, new immigration policies were created to create a sense of security and thus re-establish trust in The United States' sovereignty.

The definition of a felony, however, is so ambiguous that nonviolent offenses can justify the deportation of an individual (Oboler 2009:49). Immigration detention is a strategy used to stem the flow of undocumented persons in the United States. By utilizing immigrant laws as criminal laws it creates fear of an immigrant community, which is used to convey to white families how they should act by promoting a certain type of family as the norm and placing it in contrast to the immigrant family. The state's desire to produce "illegality" has categorized people of color as threats to the state and their bodies as undesirable in comparison to their documented white counterparts (Oboler 2009:50).

The adoptee and their deported immigrant family challenges the United State's Western liberal self-image because the families that adoption and deportation form speak to ongoing and historical imperial logic. The child welfare department whose responsibility is to reunite the family lack proactive policies for this reunification due to the systemic bias of the child welfare system in reunifying U.S. citizenship holding children with parents who are read as belonging to and having loyalties to another nation (Wessler 2013:6). CPS administrators, caseworkers, judges, and lawyers believe children are better off in the United States

foster care system where they have the opportunity to be adopted than they are with their parents, which goes against their mandate of family reunification and policies a parent's right to care for their child.

The US formed its borders through colonialism and imperialism, which is justified by naturalizing the state's superiority over other nations through the rhetoric of civilization and salvation. The dominant culture and historical narrative creates an illusion of US superiority. This is a nationalistic ideology that is constantly reinforced and normalized through dominant understandings of the "American identity" and reproduced through various avenues including material betterment through military enlistment. Indigenous people and people of color are able to participate in imperialistic endeavors (Smith 2006:69) and embody the same savior complex that was used against their communities. By positioning other countries as in need of salvation, we can insert our dominance over them under humanitarian justifications that do not acknowledge differing power dynamics within historical and modern relationships between different countries. The adoptee of deported parents can be read as a symbol of border control as they are used to legitimize the state's sovereignty and white ideologies through the delegitimization of immigrant families of color.

Discussion: Decolonial Solidarity

"White supremacy, as another infrastructural anchor of colonialist and capitalist power, allow for hierarchical rankings of human value so that certain lives become socially significant and meaningful while others are considered expendable and exploitable (Unsettling MN 2009:94)." The state is invested in capital, so people are reduced down to their contributions to the state (Ong 1996). Indigenous people and immigrants are depicted as dependents of the state's welfare system so to the state, which has come to value the free market more than its own citizens, they lack value. The devaluing of

Indigenous and immigrant families of color creates interracial families that act as symbols of racial progress. Adoption is a way for the state to continue its narrative of multiculturalism without the actual bodies of immigrants needing to be present. Ideologies of a post-racial society through colorblindness actually serve to deepen racial inequalities. In the case of adoption, highlighting the differences of nonwhite children and white parents creates discourse of the inherent sameness of all people, which pulls attention away from the hierarchy that renders the narratives of these children as in need of love, in need of whiteness.

For immigrants to escape this fate, they need to achieve legal status to be equal to that of other residents (Castles & Miller 2014: 67) and it is in this quest for belonging that immigrants need to remember that “...seeking to connect as a settler to occupied land is an act of colonization because it seeks to legitimize and justify our place here (Unsettling MN 2009:55).” The state enables immigrants to participate in the destruction of Indigenous sovereignty and land claims if they assimilate to white culture (Smith 2006:68). Immigrants cannot let their struggle for recognition by the state justify their role in the ongoing colonial project of Indigenous people. What are the obligations of immigrants living on the stolen land of Indigenous peoples? Being an immigrant, like being a person of color, does not negate one’s settler status and the benefits that come with it, but not all non-Natives benefit equally from settler-colonialism and not all non-Indigenous people came by choice. For example, the roots of systematic anti-blackness are interwoven with the roots of colonialism as this “anti-blackness that began on Turtle Island, when African people were violently stolen from their indigenous homelands and brought by white people to ours” the United States to be exploited as labour on Indigenous land (Simpson 2014). These complexities of belonging to the US nation state need to be named because it is in this recognition that the solutions will be found.

Immigrants need to be wary of mirroring colonial power structures in their activism, which can be done by working in solidarity with Indigenous people and opposing the state’s erasure project of Indigenous folk. Creating space for Indigenous peoples’ perspectives in conversations about immigration not only works against the project of invisibility, but also recognizes that Indigenous nations relationships to and understandings of land are legitimate, which would render the United States’ propertied understanding as deligitimate. By recognizing Indigenous peoples as the ones who have the right to determine who belongs to and can exist on the land, it is a direct challenge to the state’s reproduction of a white citizenry. By participating in a decolonizing framework across locations and experiences, and in connecting academics and activism, within the larger context of decolonial struggle immigrants are claiming their rights to their own identities. Decolonization is not incorporation into Indigenous society, but rather is “the process of breaking your identity with and loyalty to [dominant] culture,” (Unsettling MN 2009:9). It is in this breakage that immigrant communities benefit because “dismantling colonization includes an understanding of one’s own cultural identity by learning that one does come from somewhere and connecting to that place,” which means their cultural differences are able to exist without the coercive benefits of assimilation looming (Unsettling MN 2009:56).

To illustrate an example of how Indigenous and immigrant solidarity can manifest itself, I turn to one of the student-led workshops that took place during the 21st international roundtable at Macalester College on migration. The international roundtable demonstrates how current activism and academics on migration reproduce the invisibility project for Indigenous people, with the exception of the “Between Borders: American Transnational Adoptees” workshop. Sandy White Hawk’s recounting of her adoption story recognized the sovereignty of Native Nations because she talked about the process she underwent to reestablish

citizenship with her tribe. By positioning Sandy White Hawk as both a transracial and transnational adoptee, the workshop reinforced Indigenous nations as separate governments from the United States.

Conclusion

When it comes to white couples adopting nonwhite children, the typical conversation revolves around cultural distinctiveness and white people's ability to raise Indigenous children and children of color. The conversation needs to take on a critical lens about how race is being used as a political tool in transracial and transnational adoption. It's not that white parents aren't capable of loving nonwhite children or that there aren't ways for white parents to raise culturally aware children of color and Indigenous children. Some white parents have resisted the reproduction of whiteness into their adopted children through a variety of methods including learning about the culture of their children, sending their children to culture camps, teaching their children the language of their people, cooking the food of their culture, and some even live out the advice of adoptee activist John Raible and move into neighborhoods with large numbers of people who are from the culture of the adoptee (2011). There is an entire body of literature for white parents to educate themselves (Raible 2011, Trenka & etc. 2006). Adoption can be a legitimate way to create a family, but the existence of love in any interracial relationships will not solve the persistent systemic racism and colonialism in the United States, especially when it is being used to justify the existence of those systems.

Because adoption is a migration narrative that tells the story of rescue through love, it

creates these natural barriers that prevent the real questions from being asked. Focusing on assessments of white parents' capability obscures the unequal relations that Indigenous and immigrant parents of color have with the state that enable the movement of their children into wealthy white families. By highlighting the role that welfare policy plays in separating families rather than in protecting and insuring the reunification of families, it becomes more apparent that the systematic removal of nonwhite children results from racist, imperialist, and colonial discourse that pathologize nonwhite family units. This cycle, in turn, reinforces white cultural values and interests.

For Natives, adoption serves as an extension of the ongoing colonial project of tribal termination, which is fueled by the state's need to reinforce its sovereignty by erasing Indigenous presence in colonized land. For immigrants, namely immigrants of color, adoption is an extension of the deportation process, which acts as a means of state control. This regulates the relationships the state, as an entity meant to protect and punish, has with its citizens. Adoption creates a belief that individual solutions can address systemic social problems. Adoption can also be a point of departure for solidarity between Indigenous people and immigrants. Since different communities of color are impacted by white supremacy and the immigration system uniquely, I urge further research that fleshes out these distinctions. The United States was a multicultural entity long before the arrival of European colonizers, later immigrants, and the use of adoption to create interracial families. Immigrant and Indigenous struggles against white supremacy are historically and politically interlinked.

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