"A sense of hope and the possibility of solidarity"

Colonialism, capitalism, and Native liberation

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz

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In 2014, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz published An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States. The book appeared during the height of the Idle No More movement organized to protect Indigenous sovereignty and the environment, and the convergence of hundreds of thousands of people to New York calling for climate justice.

Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has spent decades as a revolutionary and a feminist, organizing against the Vietnam War, participating in the movement for women's liberation, and becoming active in the American Indian Movement and the International Indian Treaty Council following the occupation at Wounded Knee in 1973; and joining solidarity movements supporting liberation movements in Africa, the Caribbean, the Pacific, and Latin America. Over the years, she has written numerous books about the histories of Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

Dunbar-Ortiz is part of a group of scholars who are trying to break down some of the walls between Native Americans and Marxists. Some of these walls have been built by the legacy of Stalinist and Maoist organizations that held backward ideas of Native Americans. The collection Marxism and Native Americans edited by Ward Churchill best exemplifies this tradition. Glen Coulthard's book Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition accepts Marxism as a useful tool to analyze capitalism but doesn't fully adopt Marxism as a way forward for Native American liberation. In contrast, Howard Adams, who was Roxanne's mentor, came from a Marxist background and believed that Natives and non-Natives needed to unite to destroy capitalism and fight for Native and workers' liberation.[1]

In this interview, Dunbar-Ortiz recounts her life on the left and her history of activism, as well as her views of the role of capitalism in the oppression of Native Americans and the relationship between capitalism and settler colonialism in the United States. This interview not only introduces Dunbar-Ortiz as an activist and author, but looks to start a conversation that is critical on the left: What is the relationship between Native Americans and capitalism? What role do Native Americans have in a revolutionary movement? She spoke to Ragina Johnson and Brian Ward.

[1] Howard Adams was a Métis activist and author of *Prison of Grass: Canada from a Native Point of View* (Canada: Fifth House Publishers; second edition, 1989).

Could you tell us some of your history as an activist and how you got involved in these issues?

I came into the American Indian Movement (AIM) a few years after it was founded, in 1973 during Wounded Knee II. I had been involved at San Francisco State in the early 1960s and things were beginning to rumble there during the civil rights movement. I was married and a working-class student. The Left seemed like an elite crew to me, and I couldn't find anyone to relate to until some African-American students invited me to come to a Du Bois Club meeting that had started there at SF State.

Then I went to UCLA and there was a big Du Bois Club in Los Angeles. Of course it was a Communist Party affiliate. I was mainly involved in Latin American history as a graduate student, specifically the anti-imperialist and anti-apartheid movements, because African studies and Latin American studies crossed over a lot [in] supporting national liberation movements. That was the main context for my politics, and Marxism was not that popular in the New Left. I personally loved the old Communists and thought they were great. I loved listening to their stories, especially the labor struggles. My grandfather had been in the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) in Oklahoma. This was the ideological setting that I had in my mind, but I couldn't quite understand the New Left, and why they wanted to avoid Marxist theory, because I didn't understand anti-communism and the Cold War yet.

During this time I was doing my academic research. I ended up finally writing my dissertation in 1974. I was in residence at UCLA for three years. Then I went off to be a full-time revolutionary until I decided to teach. But I was with the Latin American students who were mostly Mexican-American, and not at all allergic to Marxism, coming from the Mexican revolutionary tradition. I was exposed to a lot, and I became more of an activist during the anti-Vietnam War movement. I learned some organizing skills, and toward the end of my time at UCLA we were trying to organize a teaching assistants' union. The union was formed after I left, and I felt I had helped lay the foundations for that.

In the summer of 1967, I went off to London to work with the African National Congress (ANC). I was there for three months and this was the first time I ever met real revolutionaries [at the] African National Congress world headquarters. Getting to know the ANC and learning from its experiences was quite sobering after three years at university, and what felt like mainly talk. Instead, everything had consequences for the ANC.

That was an important learning experience, and the ANC wanted me to stay and work with them. They had recruited a number of people who did stay and I sometimes regret that I did not stay. After leaving London, I visited some of the veterans of the Vietnam War who had deserted the war effort and were living in Geneva, Switzerland. I decided I had to go back to the United States and get involved in the revolution, because everyone would be needed. I felt that there wasn't all that much I could contribute to the ANC because I had no direct connections.

I was also becoming more and more troubled by male chauvinism in the movement. It was clear it was in the general society, but I romanticized the movement, especially the ANC, and thought they were better than that. Returning to the United States and organizing in the Boston area, I got angrier and angrier at men in the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the anti-draft movement, the motto of which was, "Girls say yes to boys who say no." I hadn't felt oppressed so much directly, but of course I was, although I had been treated as a kind of "honorary" man. Once I started taking a feminist stand I got condemned. It was pretty hard to take at the time. And male chauvinism had terrible consequences for the women's movement and for

the development of the left, because it took some of the strongest feminists out of the Left and made the Left unwelcoming to newly politicized young women.

How did you get involved in AIM and make connections with the broader Left at the time?

I finished my dissertation at UCLA on the history of land tenure in New Mexico's Indigenous practices from precolonial to the mid-twentieth century, then took a teaching position in a new Native American Studies program at Cal State Hayward [today known as California State University, East Bay]. Even while writing my dissertation the year before, I got involved with the Wounded Knee Legal Defense/Offense committee, which was based in South Dakota but had a large contingent in the San Francisco Bay area. Two of the main lawyers on the hundreds of criminal cases that stemmed from arrests following the Wounded Knee siege, John Thorne and Vine Deloria Jr., asked me to serve as an expert witness at a hearing to dismiss the remaining Wounded Knee cases, based on the Sioux–US Treaty of 1868, which maintained Sioux sovereignty over all that transpired in their treaty territory. I was no expert on Native American treaties, but Vine Deloria Jr. guided me to the literature. At the two-week hearing held in federal court in Lincoln, Nebraska, I served as an expert witness but also as part of the legal team. Ninety percent of the testimony from Sioux elders provided the oral history of the Sioux nation, their treaty with the United States, and the wars that followed, culminating in the 1890 US Army massacre of unarmed Sioux refugees. At the end of the hearing, the elders asked me to turn the court transcripts into an oral history of the Great Sioux Nation, which I worked on for the following three years, publishing the book by that name in 1977.[2]

Soon, I got involved in the project AIM developed with the elders, with the founding of the International Indian Treaty Council, to go to the United Nations with the Sioux treaty. In 1977 we had the first international meeting, and the rest of my time in the Indigenous movement has mainly been that international work, which continues to this day. The movement developed over three decades, culminating in success in the UN General Assembly's 2007 Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and has tripled in participation since then.

Now back to AIM itself. AIM was in the "rainbow coalition" with other organizations like the Black Panther Party, the Puerto Rican Young Lords, the Chicano Crusade for Justice, and other organizations. AIM was founded in 1968, in Minneapolis just one year before the occupation of Alcatraz. The founders were Ojibwa, but the movement spread throughout the country. This was all in the context of the civil rights movement and rise of the Black Panther Party. The uprising at Alcatraz was pretty much grassroots and organized by urban Indians in the Bay Area and Native students, especially at San Francisco State, where the Third World liberation movement and strike took place in 1968.[3] A Native student, Richard Oakes, was one of the leaders of the strike and a leader in the liberation of Alcatraz in 1969. John Trudell, who would become the chairman of AIM, was another leader at Alcatraz. But the leadership of Native women such as LaNada War Jacket, Madonna Thunder Hawk, and Lorelei DeCora was the essential element that allowed the community to remain for eighteen months.

The struggles of Indigenous people have a rich history, and really came together in the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s with other movements for liberation. In your

[2] *The Great Sioux Nation: Sitting in Judgment on America* (Lincoln, NE: Bison Books, 2013).

[3] The Third World Liberation Front was a broad coalition of Chicano, Native American, Asian American and African American students who organized against institutional racism on campuses, and successfully won the College of Ethnic Studies at San Francisco State College.

books, it's clear you are making the connection between land dispossession, labor, and class—basically Marx's approach of historical materialism. You even quoted Marx from Capital in the beginning of chapter two, entitled "Culture of Conquest." Why is this approach important to struggles for liberation?

I think Marxism is a hard sell in the Native movement and for African Americans but less so for Mexican Americans because of their political genealogies. Today it's even difficult for Chicanos, as well as Native Americans, because Marxism is deemed just Western epistemology or a Western worldview. There is of course a lot of Eurocentrism in Marx's early writings. There is the idea of progress, but people don't look at his later work enough, when he was getting into ethnology.[4] He didn't know much about non-European peoples, yet making generalities about the whole world can seem imperialist. However, I found out when I was doing my dissertation, that using Marxism to look at the history of land tenure in New Mexico at different stages from Spanish colonization through US conquest and colonization was essential. Marx describes the initial looting of the Americas as reckless abandon, as well as the enslavement of Africans, and the genocide of Native Americans, and this describes the initial Spanish invasion and occupation of New Mexico, which led to the All Indian Pueblo Revolt driving the Spanish colonists out for more than a decade.[5] The second period of eighteenth-century Spanish colonialism was far more of a negotiated relationship. It was still colonialism but it wasn't the most vicious kind, and the Spanish army was there to defend that zone from French and British expansion.[6]

Through the history of Mexico becoming independent and then New Mexico being taken by the US, I tried to look at capitalist development and to link this with imperialism. I read all kinds of things from Marx and participated in Marxist study groups. At the time I hadn't done a real study of Capital. I started reading about Oriental despotism, and Marx's analysis of how the pyramids were built. These grand public works were built by forced labor, and I connected that to what I was seeing in precolonial Indigenous New Mexico—they had elaborate irrigation systems, which were also throughout Mexico and Central America. You have almost a dictatorship to control water, but the way Indigenous peoples organized it was with serial dictatorships. The ditch boss would be elected for one year and had total control of the water in each pueblo. These ninety-eight city-states along the Rio Grande and its tributaries also went to war with each other periodically over water, so it could be very serious. They could starve as a result of being in the desert. With the water supply, they had an absolute autocratic ditch boss and everyone had to contribute labor. There wasn't a class of laborers, and after a year the ditch boss could never again be in that position. It had to change every year so that they didn't get used to the power.

[4] Karl Marx in his later years wrote ethnological notebooks looking at precapitalist societies, including studying the Iroquois in North America. Marx didn't live long enough to complete this study. It was later published under co-authors Karl Marx and Lawrence Krader, *The Ethnological Notebooks of Karl Marx: Studies of Morgan, Phear, Maine, Lubbock* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1972).

[5] This is known as the Pueblo Revolt of 1680, led by Popé, which succeeded in pushing out the Spanish for twelve years before they reconquered the area.

[6] This area of the southwest United States is often referred to as the borderlands. Gloria Anzaldúa defined this area as a zone that is not fully the US or Mexico and can go in between both cultural worlds. See Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999). Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron argue in their essay "From Borderlands to Borders" how borderlands were more fluid culturally and ethnically. Indigenous people cohabited with non-Natives and retained some of their power prior to the solidification of the US and Mexico nation-state borders. See Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in between in North American History," *The American Historical Review*, vol. 104, no. 3 (1999), 814–41.

This history shows how people can organize themselves in different ways; capitalism and exploitative labor were not inevitable in human history. Just because capitalism came to dominate the world through European and United States imperialism, forcing the world to live under capitalism does not mean it was inevitable. We need to build upon Marx's brilliant comprehension of how capitalism arose in Europe and how it works. But the social and political systems that produced ancient irrigation systems and widespread agricultural production in the Americas were not despotic.[7] It has been said the beginning of the class system started in ancient Egypt, but I found things that didn't fit that mold. I tried to apply the basic tenets of Marxism and especially what is known as "primitive accumulation".

I want to mention here that there are a lot of words Marx used that should be retranslated. For instance regarding primitive accumulation, it's just easy to say "primary" or "higher" but Marxists don't know what you're talking about unless you say primitive. In other languages, primitive means primary.[8] It doesn't necessarily have the baggage that the word "primitive" does for Indigenous peoples subjected to European ethnography. It became clear to me while working on my thesis that the first big onslaught of the primitive accumulationprocess that set off capitalist development happens over and over again, even today. This has entered into a part of Native studies with Glen Coulthard's book, Red Skin, White Masks, in which he makes that argument.[9] Coulthard identifies with the anarchist tendency, but he takes on Ward Churchill's piece in Marxism and Native Americans.[10] Coulthard says it's ridiculous to not use such an important tool as Marx's work.

In all my work, I try to apply historical materialism. However, I don't think any of the original Marxists and following generations of European Marxists dealt with colonialism as the avatar of capitalism. Lenin theorized imperialism, but he dealt with it in the most technical way of financial capital, which is really important. And he did deal with national liberation. But I don't think Marx or Lenin even began to understand the role the US was playing throughout the nineteenth century as the vortex of capitalism, and what I try to show is that from the very beginning the United States was based on colonial conquest, and on overseas imperialism following their independence from the British Empire.

As we have been diving into current debates and writings from the Left, we have found an absence of analysis on the question of Native Americans and labor. You mentioned Glen Coulthard earlier and he actually says in the introduction of Red Skin, White Masks,

> **It appears that the history of dispossession, not proletarianization, has been the dominant background structure shaping the character of the historical relationship between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian state ... Stated**

[7] There are many precapitalist economic formations that don't conform to Karl Marx's model of Oriental despotism, and in fact Marx changed how he described some precapitalist societies in his later writing. This is detailed in Kevin Anderson, *Marx at the Margins: On Nationalism, Ethnicity, and Non-Western Societies* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[8] During Karl Marx's writing of *Capital* his use of the word "primitive" meant primary or first rather than stating inferiority of cultures. Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy* (New York: Penguin Books, 1990).

[9] Published by University of Minnesota Press in 2014.

[10] Ward Churchill published a book of essays in 1983 for South End Press called *Marxism and Native Americans,* which counterposes indigeneity to Marxism. The latter, however, is represented in the collection largely by Maoist authors. Churchill's lead essay argues that Marxism is a European ideology that is alien to Native American culture.

bluntly, the theory and practice of Indigenous anticolonialism, including Indigenous anticapitalism, is best understood as a struggle primarily inspired by and oriented around the question of land … and less around our emergent status as "rightless proletarians."

But in fact, you have talked about many Native Americans being part of the working class as you mention recently in your Real News interview.[11] Why is this?

For instance, in the Diné Nation (Navajo reservation), the energy industry has long dominated, and in the 1970s, Navajos formed trade unions to demand that they have the jobs and job training. In the early part of the twentieth century, Navajos and Pueblo Indians made up much of the work force on the railroads that ran through their territories in the Southwest. In the federal government's relocation program of the 1950s and 1960s, half the reservation and rural population migrated to urban areas for jobs in industry; however, many had moved on their own during the war to work in the defense industry. I think ignoring this is a problem for some academics. Some of the Native people in academia come from more prosperous families. I don't believe any Native person is super wealthy; even in the biggest casinos the money is distributed and there is not a real ruling class—but there are definitely class issues in terms of consciousness. All the AIM activists were from working-class families, but are no less Lakota, Diné, or Salish because of it. They worked at all kinds of jobs. So for me, I felt really comfortable in AIM because it was working class and people were not ashamed to be workers. In fact they were quite proud, and they were drawn to unions when anyone bothered to organize them.

When the Navajo workers began to organize in the 1970s with the United Mine Workers, it was against federal law for unions to organize on Indian reservations. Peter McDonald[12] challenged that and won. The Navajo workers had specific demands for medical benefits; they bargained to include their medicine men to be paid. They had the Indian Health Service, but they wanted to pay their medicine people and were able to get this into their contract. They are very strong union people. Unfortunately, there are other problems with the fossil-fuel industry and internal struggles in reservations over ending extraction for environmental reasons.

I think Coulthard is trying to say that exploitation and expropriation are different things. But all capitalism starts with expropriation of land from the producers, and not just in the Americas but as the prerequisite for the development of capitalism in Europe. That's what I describe as the culture of conquest in my book, about the commons being fenced in and that all expropriation started with the land.

We've been trying to use Marxism as the framework to talk about Indigenous issues. If you merely say Marxism is European, you miss the point of the theory. People forget that Marx actually talked about who was expropriated, how people were actually dispossessed, and how that created the material basis ultimately for colonization, and how the vast majority of settlers and migrants who came to the US ended up in factories as low-wage workers.

I worked hard on the first chapter of my book about the precolonial era in the Americas, where there were prosperous and urban civilizations without capitalism, and that is so hopeful. Most radical forms of anarchism now are anticivilization, and they often look to Native people as

[11] The Real News Network interview with Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz in October of 2014, therealnews.com…

[12] Peter McDonald was a Diné code talker in World War II and was the first elected Tribal Chairman of the Diné Nation (Navajo reservation) in 1970.

the inspiration. They use Indigenous peoples, especially Native people in the Americas, pulling out what they want to justify their ideology. They are creating fantasies as evidence and even calling it science. Anarchists, especially the primitivists, view agriculture as the basis of all evil, because they are looking at agribusiness, and they don't want to know at all that 90 percent of Native people in the Western hemisphere were agriculturalists—they don't want to know that fact. So they romanticize Native people as "hunter-gatherers."

This viewpoint distorts the reality in the Western hemisphere. The civilizations of central Mexico and the Andes were still developing before the Europeans intervened. The civilizations of the Americas were going in a different direction than Europe or Asia. I think had Marx really been able to study or know what was hardly even knowable at that time, he would have said that capitalism in the Americas was not inevitable. I always say that 500 years ago with the invasion of the Americas, a wrong path was taken for humanity. So let's say that capitalism is wrong and destructive, not that it was inevitable. For example, with the ancestral Puebloans, it was clearly a choice. They had a large civilization up on Mesa Verde [in present day Colorado]; they had irrigation ditches for miles and were overusing the wood, because everything was built of wood. They were probably becoming less democratic, and they made the choice to migrate to the Rio Grande area of northern New Mexico and break down into smaller villages. They continued to function like city-states, but they were smaller than the one large civilization up at Mesa Verde. And why not say that was a choice and just maybe that the Americas were going in a different direction, rather than interpreting this or the Maya devolvement as "collapse?" This is something to learn from: civilization without capitalism and how can it work. This is tied with the concept of humans being a part of nature; for example, conventional Marxist thinking argues that private property began with the domestication of animals in Africa. However, in America the ancestral peoples did not domesticate animals for food or as beasts of burden. In the civilizations of Central America, parrots and dogs were domesticated but were considered sacred. The Spanish invaders noted that the Aztec dogs did not bark, but they learned to bark from the Spanish war dogs.

Can you talk more about the relationship between settler colonialism and capitalism? What do you define as settler colonialism? What is the difference between settler colonialism and outpost colonialism?

Yes, it is really important. I am not sure I entirely succeed in the book on this because the tendency of European-based Marxism is to separate the two, and of course in the United States they are like two separate worlds. Because of Lenin, we have a good connection between capitalism and imperialism, and most people assume the connection. But with colonialism, bourgeois history tends to call things colonialism that weren't colonialism, such as the Roman Empire. Yes, they had colonies, but it wasn't capitalist-based. It was a different era; so people like to say "people have been colonizing each other forever," but colonialism is just a different system under capitalism. In settler colonialism, Europeans export people with the promise of land, and private property, so that land itself becomes the chief commodity in the primitive accumulation of capital, and in North America, colonists also enslaved Africans as both market commodities and unpaid and unfree labor. This is a distinct form of colonialism, which obviously proved to be the most effective in building the most powerful capitalist state, the United States. The main form of European colonialism was to exploit resources—precious metals, African bodies, spices—in which Native labor was organized with European overseers and bureaucrats, as well as Native middlemen. This form of colonialism, of course, produced great wealth for the European monar-

chies and later European states and created the structures of unequal global markets that persist today.

I want to make clear that there is not one "settler colonial" or "colonial" experience. Each has to be analyzed on its own terms, depending on many factors, such as which colonial state and which period of time is being considered. The European fetish for gold that developed during the Middle Ages drove nearly all of the early colonial ventures, but rare spices were also worth their weight in gold. And most importantly, the study of any colonial situation requires understanding the level and nature of resistance to these invasions. In making general conclusions regarding the Anglo and Anglo-American colonization of North America, it is essential to keep in mind that each of the hundreds of Native nations had a unique experience of colonialism, always destructive, but varying in details and survivability.

It's inaccurate to speak, for instance, of "the California Indians." The eighteenth-century Spanish colonization of the coastal region from San Diego to San Francisco was carried out by Franciscan missionaries with the use of the Spanish army in seizing people in the whole region to be incarcerated in the missions, and to work for the missionaries in their commercial pursuits. So these weren't typical settlers, but it was settler colonialism. On the other hand, the nearly half of California north of San Francisco was not colonized until the United States confiscated the northern part of what had become Mexico, and the rush of settlers arrived as gold seekers with the 1850s gold rush. These were not typical settlers either, combining extraction with genocide.

Colonialism in general is disruptive, destructive, damaging, sometimes depopulating entire areas, such as the Natchez villagers of the Mississippi Delta, and the Nahuatl-speaking villagers of western Nicaragua and western Honduras who were seized by Spanish slave traders in the sixteenth century, then transported to work in the mines of Peru. European settlers didn't arrive to those nearly depopulated areas until later. This was similar to the way villagers of West Africa were captured, enslaved, and sold in the Americas, losing their existence as particular nations and peoples.

I would say that settler colonialism was an exceptional mode of colonialism. English settler colonialism in the North American colonies took its specific form from the mid-seventeenth-century English conquest of Ireland, in which English forces under Oliver Cromwell drove subsistent Irish farmers off their land and gave land grants to English and Scottish settlers. The developing English capitalism based in the wool industry required surplus labor to work in the factories, as well as large swaths of grazing land for commercial sheep production. The process of fencing the commons and driving English farmers off the land created that surplus labor force, but also a pool of settlers who were promised free land in America. The Protestant Anglos and Scots, who settled Northern Ireland, made up the majority of frontier settlers in the British North American colonies.

The Portuguese and the Spanish were specifically seeking gold and silver. Their hoarding of gold and silver actually limited their ability to develop capitalism. They didn't really have a basis for that in the Iberian Peninsula after they deported all the farmers, craftsmen, architects, and other producers who were Muslims and Jews. Only in the eighteenth century did Spain begin establishing settler-colonies in the southern cone of South America, employing the same genocidal methods of eliminating or driving out the Indigenous peoples, which continued when Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay became independent.

However, only the United States developed effective capitalism outside of Britain. By 1840, it was already the largest economic power in the world on the basis of the global cotton trade and

textile factories, also providing cotton to the British textile industry. Until recently, economic historians have dated the development of US capitalism to post–Civil War industrialization in the North. Several recent books have convincingly made the case for the cotton kingdom in the Mississippi Valley being the site of the birth of full-blown capitalism prior to the Civil War, based on slave labor and the capital generated by the value of the slaves' bodies.[13] This development included the parallel expulsion of the five large Native agricultural nations from the Southeast during the 1830s and 1840s, generating huge amounts of capital in land sales.

Related to this, do you see a difference between Coulthard and your mentor Howard Adams on these questions and how they view Marxism and socialism in relation to Native people?

Having read both of them, I would say first that Coulthard identifies with anarchism. But unlike many anarchists, he is not at all allergic to using aspects of Marxist theory, and he criticizes the idea of dismissing Marxist ideas and arguments. Most important, he identifies capitalism as an enemy of Indigenous self-determination. In his extraordinary book Red Skin, White Masks, he writes, "For Indigenous nations to live, capitalism must die. And for capitalism to die, we must actively participate in the construction of Indigenous alternatives to it."

In that respect, Coulthard and Adams are the same. They both argue that capitalism must die for Indigenous peoples to be free. But at the same time, Coulthard does not recognize the proletarian nature of most Native people's lives for the past several centuries. I understand that his research is grounded in Dené reality.

Howard, on the other hand, grounded his research in the Métis world. In his classic work Prison of Grass, he combines autobiography and the history of the Métis; he characterizes the greatest uprising of Indigenous peoples in Canada and maybe all of North America as a workers' struggle as well as being an anticolonial struggle. This was the revolution, led by Louis Riel, against the exploitation of the Métis workers in the fur trade, as well as the encroachments into Native territories.[14] And, of course, in México and in the Andean region, Indigenous labor is the primary exploited labor. In fact, Native individuals were primarily workers in the colonial economic systems that existed in the US and Canada. They are not significantly a part of the 1 percent: they are workers. A person can have an identity as a worker without losing their Indigenous identity.

This does not mean I completely agree with Howard Adams. In the mid-1970s when he was a mentor of mine, I learned a great deal from him. Howard aligned with development theory, which was theorized by economists such as Andre Gunder Frank and others who were looking at Latin America, the Caribbean, and Africa, and how European colonialism/capitalism underdeveloped these peoples. The United Nations decolonization mission adopted development theory, with formerly colonized nations calling for transfer of technology and wealth from the rich countries, a kind of reparations plan. The entire regime collapsed in 1980, when the United States withdrew its participation. Howard, like Coulthard, saw alternative Indigenous development as a way to undermine capitalism.

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[13] See: Sven Beckert, *Empire of Cotton: A Global History* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014); Edward Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014); and Walter Johnson, *River of Dark Dreams: Slavery and Empire in the Cotton Kingdom* (Cambridge, Mass: Belknap Press, 2013).

[14] The Métis, a people located mostly in the southern and central areas of Manitoba, had their origins in the mixed-race descendants of the First Nations people and early colonial British and French settlers. Louis David Riel was a nineteenth century Métis who led two rebellions against the Canadian government and was executed in 1885.

Howard Adams also linked US and Canadian overseas imperialisms as something not new to the twentieth century, but rooted in their colonization of the peoples of North America. He was a pioneer in making that connection in the early 1970s. Now, for Native scholars, it is taken for granted.

But it's not surprising that both Coulthard and Adams come out of the Indigenous communities in Canada, where they didn't experience the level of anticommunism that existed in the United States. The Communist Party in Canada early on included many of the First Peoples who organized Communist Party chapters, particularly in Native fishing villages in British Columbia. The Native presence in or near the Marxist Left and trade unions is very different than in the United States.

However, I think a great many Native people in the United States very much feel a unity with militant workers' struggles. I've always found in the Native movement when I tell stories about my grandfather, about the history of the IWW and Socialist Party in Oklahoma, and especially about the 1917 Green Corn Rebellion, in which landless Native, Anglo, and African-American tenant farmers rose up against conscription into World War I, calling it a "rich man's war," that there is a sense of hope and possibility for solidarity to struggle together in mutual interest.

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