

# Visioning climate pasts

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# Framing Questions

What establishes a community as a 'worthy area of study'?

What does this framing tell us about Sayers' approach to understanding climate resistance in the Great Dismal Swamp?

What significance does academia place on 'turning points'? Who gets to determine what a 'turning point' is?

1607-1670: Indigenous folx primary group travelling through Great Dismal Swamp

1750-1860: Peak of Maroon communities in Great Dismal Swamp

1607  
Jamestown Colony

1860  
Civil War, Slavery  
Abolished

1763  
Company-enslaved workers  
brought into swamp to build  
canals

# “A Dismal Place”

*“The Inhabitants here live scattering generally at 1/2 a Mile or Miles distance from one another except in Lewes where 58 Families are settled together. And yet this area contained a sufficiency of resources to meet the needs of the Nanticokes.”*

-John Oldmixon; on Sussex county settlements (late 18th century).

As American colonization sprawled, existing native settlements were pushed towards the tidal headwaters of their original territories, and remained in these ‘dismal’ swamps and islands to minimize contact with white settlements.



Vegan Dan Sayers

<https://vegnews.com/2018/3/meet-the-vegan-antropologist-changing-academia>

# Praxis

“Kinetics, the act of doing, isn’t just praxis; it also generates and animates theory within Indigenous contexts, and it is the crucial intellectual mode for generating knowledge. Theory and praxis, story and practice are interdependent, cogenerators of knowledge. Practices are politics. Processes are governance. Doing produces more knowledge.”

- Leanne Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*



# Praxis Mode of Production

- Does not emerge as a result of violence
- Not a direct reaction to state oppression
  - Refuses to be merely reactionary.
- Praxis-relations in social production protects material-social culture from oppression and alienation
- Long-term use (sustainable?)
- Makes use of marginalized spaces not valued (and thus not monitored or targeted) by state-sponsored (industrial) modes of production.
- Process > production?
  - Preserved stories + relational ties to land



SUPPLY STORE, DISMAL SWAMP.

# MD Laws; Confiscation of cultural identity

*Slave uprisings in the South (particularly the one led by Nat Turner in 1831) inspire fear in white landowners as well as slave owners*

Levi Sockum is a Nanticoke gas station proprietor

- 1840 Acquires land and legally becomes a head of house
- 1855 Charged for selling gunpowder to a black man (illegal at the time)
  - His racial identity is called into question, as the alleged black man was his (also native) cousin, Isaac Harmon
- 1861 Leaves Indian River community after selling his land, moves to New Jersey

# Guided Discussion: Great Dismal Swamp

Does resistance mean more depending on where it is grounded? (i.e. from the Nanticoke within the legal space of MD law, or from the unnamed Great Dismal Swamp maroon community)

Sayers describes the GDS community as 'historically contingent,' that is it came about due to specific historic conditions that did not necessitate its existence. What is the significance of historically contingent communities such as the GDS? What other resistance communities can be described as historically contingent? Where can we look to find the conditions and space for historically contingent communities of resistance today?



# Constellations of Co-Resistance

- Constellations as coded, fugitive, opaque mappings.
  - Limits imposed by the spaces we take up and occupy
  - Fugitivity and the Great Dismal Swamp.
    - GDS as a flight path out of slavery, out of colonialism, onto the land.
  - Opacity and the Great Dismal Swamp.
    - What limits Sayers' understandings of the GDS community?
- International Constellations
  - How do we imagine the 'national,' the 'international'?
  - What do constellated movements look like between humans and non-humans, living and the non-living?



<http://www.leannesimpsonmusic.com/flight>

# Idle No More: Digital Movement Building

## *Digital Dispossession*

- Who profits from internet use? What entanglements complicate social media use?
  - “I wonder how the Internet, as another structure of control whose primary purpose is to make corporations money, is at all helpful in building movements. I wonder if the simulated worlds of the Internet are *simulations* that serve only to amplify capitalism, misogyny, transphobia, anti-queerness, and white supremacy and create further dependencies on settler colonialism in the physical world” (Leanne Simpson *As We Have Always Done* p.221).

*How is praxis generated on the internet?*

# Another good L. Simpson kwote or two

On social media: “It centers individuals within a corporate, capitalist, coded algorithm -- an algorithm that we have no control over and that most of us don’t even know how it works. It creates a false sense of power and influence. It scans our digital lives and then markets them back to us. Every piece of cyber resistance makes *them* more money and consolidates *their* power” (p. 224).

“It allows white liberals to crown leaders for us through likes, shares, followers, and protest selfies, and spokespersons for our movements are chosen without regard to the movement itself, let alone grounded normativity” (p. 224).

# Constellating Co-Resistance

What does solidarity mean? In Idle No More? In global climate resistance?

➤ Where does one ground searches for solidarity between communities?

Whiteness: What does it mean to 'center whiteness'?

“We need to develop [personal relationships] as place-based constellations of theory and practice because when we put our energy into building constellations of coresistance within grounded normativity that refuse to center whiteness, our real white allies show up in solidarity anyway” (p. 231).

# Mapping Activity

*Draw connections (constellations) between your timeline events through their shared ideological, visible & structural interventions.*

## Constellated Relationships as

- Relationships of resistance/resurgence/refusal
- Emergent from specific grounded normativities
- “Opaque, fugitive theoretical interventions”

“The concept of constellation provides a different conceptual way of collectively ordering beyond individual everyday acts of resurgence” (p. 216).

Filipino Constitution ratified in 1987

Constitution of the Haida Nation  
adopted in 2003

Constitutions (*leaf*)  
Legal sovereignty (*trunk*)  
Self-governance (*root*)

Organization-based political pressure  
(*trunk*)  
Refusal of (mis)recognition (*root*)

Construction of the Harmon &  
Hollyville Schools by the Nanticoke in  
1881

Allied Tribes of BC reject  
McKenna-McBride Findings in  
1919.



# Checking Out



[https://pictorial.jezebel.com/how-t  
he-great-dismal-swamp-hic-runawa  
y-slaves-for-more-1786058023](https://pictorial.jezebel.com/how-t<br/>he-great-dismal-swamp-hic-runawa<br/>y-slaves-for-more-1786058023)

- *What is one assumption you didn't realize you carried before today?*
  - *What is one thing from today that you will take with you?*
  - *What is one question from today you still have?*

