

NYU put professorial racism on display?

Sure. But first and foremost, it showcased professorial ignorance.



by Lev Tsitrin

I have not read in a very long time anything as hilarious as [the summary of NYU's colloquium](#) on "Resisting Settler Colonialism." Apparently, a bunch of academics gathered to compare strategies on how to build a time machine that would get the Americas back to the racial purity of the times before Columbus – and in the Middle East, to the good old times before Zionism. To be sure, the speakers were not physicists who deal with hard reality and know full well that travel back in time is impossible, but professors of humanities who try to achieve the desired results by wagging the tongue. The appeal with which the report starts, "if you're white, leave; it's really that simple" gives the quintessence of the mechanics of the time machine they hope to build.

This is hilarious on a number of levels. First of all, why single out the whites? Are they the only ones who contaminate the racial purity of the native American landscape? Shouldn't the blacks leave, too? Hispanics? Asians? Aren't they all foreign implants on American soil? But it looks, after all, that the academics are not as stupid as they seem. Try to say at NYU (or anywhere else, for that matter), "if you're black,

leave; it's really that simple" – and watch the reaction. That's a fire-sure way to get fired and join the ranks of the underprivileged the academics ostensibly champion – but somehow, for all their fiery revolutionary rhetoric, are loath to join. Fine academic titles and good professorial salaries are far too important to jeopardize by being consistent. So – let's give the credit where the credit is due – those academics are quite cunning, and politically astute; they choose their targets wisely, and only hit those whom they can hit with impunity.

Equally well-calculated is their selectivity at choosing the time-frame which they want to consider for their "go back home" time machine. How about those called Native Americans – who, after all, arrived here from Asia? Why stop at Columbus? To be consistent, shouldn't Natives also be pushed back to their native Eastern Asia, leaving the land to the bear, and the deer, and the beaver? That would be just – except that, where did these species come from? And from where did the trees and the grass arrive? Isn't it ultimately just to set the clock back to before living forms arrived at America's shores? Wouldn't the Mars-like desolation be the ultimate expression of justice – the land fully de-colonized, and rid of the evils of capitalism, to fulfill one of the participant's dream of "decolonizing, indigenizing, and queering institutions and territorial practices" especially given that the "destruction of settler-colonialism means the destruction of capitalism"? "Queering," after all, means "depopulating." That task accomplished, it will be up to the conscience of the bear and the deer and the rest to move out of America.

And the participants were equally careful when dealing with the time frame of the history of the Middle East. The colloquium on "Resisting Settler Colonialism" seems like a perfect place to talk about the Arab conquests which started in the 7th century AD and were the exact equivalent of

colonization of the Americas – the only difference being the mode of transportation: camels and horses rather than ships transporting the settler-colonizing Arabs from what is now the Western Saudi Arabia to the half of the then-known world, from the border of India in the East to the border of France in the West, Arab settler-colonizing enterprise eventually encompassing the Middle East, the North Africa, and Spain. But Arab settler colonialism was apparently outside the scope of “Resisting Settler Colonialism;” “if you’re Arab, leave; it’s really that simple” was not heard at the colloquium. Unlike the European settler-colonizing, the Arab one was treated by the NYU conference as *fait accompli*, it was not to be mentioned. When it came to that part of the world, the participants bashfully limited themselves to the time frame of “less than one hundred years” – so as to bash Israel. Turning the clock farther could inadvertently reveal that Israel is exactly what those academics dream about: “decolonizing, indigenizing, and queering institutions and territorial practices” – the indigenous, Jewish population coming back to its land long settler-colonized by the Arabs and giving the rights to all who live within its borders.

Yes, the academics who talk of “Resisting Settler Colonialism” have the animal cunning to avoid the sharp angles created by their own rhetoric, so as to claim the moral high ground. But look closer, and look from a factual, rather than political point of view – and their “moral high ground” turns out to have been built in a deep chasm of factually wrong, and logically unsound pseudo-reasoning. The academic “high moral ground” is far below the sea level – and far beneath contempt. The academics may be cunning – but their silly talk of contriving a time machine that would enforce social and racial justice puts their bigotry, racism and plain foolishness on full display. Yes, academics, you can run (at least, you can run colloquiums) – but you cannot hide your hypocrisy, your foolishness, and your plain ignorance.