Unsettling Narratives

Teaching About Genocide in a Settler Space

By

George D. Dalbo

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For Bob and Connie, who encouraged and enabled me to go to Austria as a high school foreign exchange student, which most definitively set me on this path.

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Prologue
Settling Down – DeWitt, Wisconsin

> When a man journeys into a far country, he must be prepared to forget many of the things he has learned, and to acquire such customs as are inherent with existence in the new land; he must abandon the old ideals and the old gods, and oftentimes he must reverse the very codes by which his conduct has hitherto been shaped.
>
> — Jack London, *In a Far Country*

In July 2020, I moved from Minneapolis, Minnesota to DeWitt[1], a rural community in south-central Wisconsin, where I accepted a position as a high school social studies teacher. Moving from a major metropolis of millions to a small farming community of roughly 2,500 inhabitants was for me, in many ways, unsettling. For many of my friends and colleagues in the Twin Cities, the move meant the loss of world-class dining, diverse cultural opportunities and institutions, and, most importantly, the conveniences of the ubiquitous Target department stores that comprise cosmopolitan civilization in the upper Midwest. The move also meant leaving the enlightened liberal ethos of Minneapolis, exchanging it for a rural conservatism that my friends understood as backward, if not also bigoted and racist. Though I partially shared these concerns and views, in other ways, moving to DeWitt and, especially, the prospect of teaching in a rural, working-class community felt enticing and reassuring.

[1] The name DeWitt, Wisconsin is a pseudonym.

Though I had lived in Minnesota for nearly 15 years, and even though Minneapolis and Saint Paul were the sites of my personal and professional development as a social studies educator and researcher, I never felt quite at home in the Twin Cities, which often seemed worlds apart from my childhood in rural, impoverished Appalachia. After years of trying to navigate the wildly fractured and unabashedly segregated educational landscape of the Twin Cities–working in public, charter, and private schools–exasperated and disillusioned, I often longed for a position in what I described to friends and colleagues as a "normal" public school. DeWitt seemed much closer to the rural, lower-class community where I was born and raised. In short, it seemed like that "normal" public school where I had longed to teach. I relished the idea of becoming a known and respected member of the close-knit community (something that seemed increasingly impossible in the spreading suburban sprawl of the Twin Cities), seeing students and their families at the only grocery store or the few restaurants in town, and, especially after years of trying in vain to find myself personally and professionally, simply settling down.

My move to DeWitt came in the midst of a global pandemic and compulsory quarantine and social distancing, the immediate aftermath of the brutal murder of George Floyd by Minneapolis police, and the runup to a contentious and violent presidential election. These events made the spring and early summer of 2020 in the Twin Cities feel isolated, hopeless, and divided. In contrast, during the summer and early fall of 2020, DeWitt seemed far removed from these realities: so far removed in fact, that one could

easily and generally ignore them. Despite the COVID-19[2] pandemic, facemasks and social distancing were mostly optional and certainly not expected in local shops and restaurants, the reality of anti-Black racism in U.S. society and discussions about police brutality and the abolition and reform of policing were non-existent, and the unwavering, nearly universal support for Donald Trump's reelection, couched in the rhetoric of upholding American values and set amidst the arcadian countryside, seemed patriotic and almost normal (see Figure P.1). Indeed, amidst the global and national once-in-a-generation upheaval, life in DeWitt felt normal. Even as the 2020-2021 school year started, students returned to the classroom in person; the August 2020 police shooting of Jacob Blake, the responding uprisings, and the co-occurring white nationalist violence in Kenosha, Wisconsin (just 60 miles away from DeWitt) went unmentioned and seemingly unnoticed by students and staff; and no plans were made by my social studies colleagues to discuss or debrief the November election with students.

Was this the "normal" that I had sought? A normalized cloak of rural, working-class, heteropatriarchal whiteness, similar to what I experienced growing up, provided solace and security, as well as insulation and isolation from the perceived threats from the "outside" world that periodically caught our attention in the traditional media or on social media. Although at times I chaffed

[2] Following recommendations from the World Health Organization, throughout this study, I use the term COVID-19 to refer to the virus SARS-CoV-2, which first emerged in Wuhan, China in December 2019 and subsequently spread across the globe. The virus and subsequent pandemic are also commonly referred to as "Coronavirus." The entirety of the data collection, analysis, and writing for this study took place amidst the COVID-19 pandemic (see "Naming the coronavirus," 2020)

at the culture of the school and community, as time wore on through the 2020-2021 school year, I began less and less to notice the lack of acknowledgment or discussion of the larger social and political realities outside of DeWitt. It was within this context that I began settling down.

Figure P.1 – Photograph of a barn from 2020 with "Vote Trump" painted on it located just outside of the village of DeWitt, Wisconsin (Author's photograph).

Chapter 1
Introduction: Settler Space

> [A]ll education in the United States takes place on Indigenous lands.
>
> —National Council for the Social Studies, "Toward Responsibility"

> [W]hat a community erects on its historical landscape not only sums up its view of the past but also influences its possible futures.
>
> — James W. Loewen, *Lies Across America*

> The Great Spirit made you with paper in one hand and pen in the other.
>
> — Mo-rah-tshay-kaw (*Little Priest*)., Ho-Chunk Chief[1]

Within this first chapter, I introduce the site of this research study, the small, rural farming community of DeWitt located in south-central Wisconsin. This chapter describes DeWitt as a settler space located on Indigenous land. Additionally, the chapter examines two preemies foundational to the arguments made in this book: (a) that the United States is a settler colonial nation-state and (b) public schooling in the

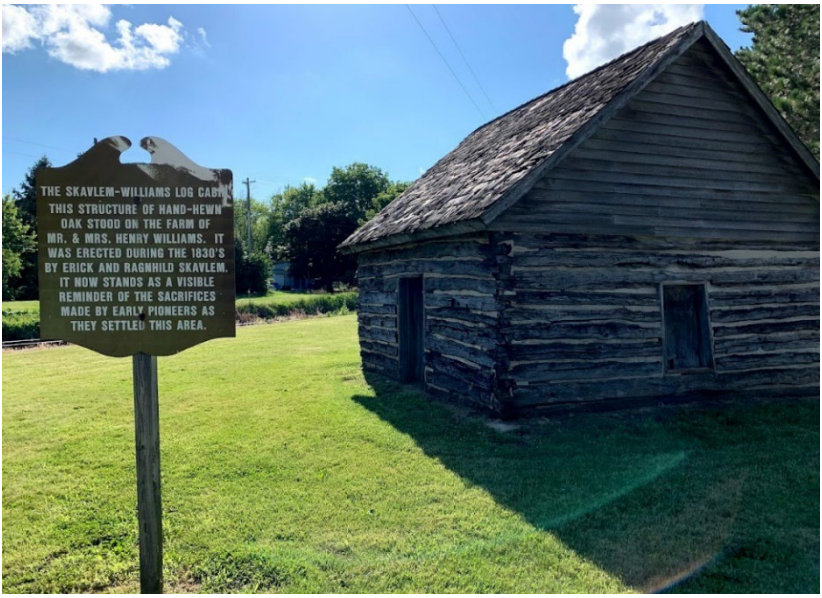
[1] Quoted in Case, 2018, p. 66. Mo-rah-tshay-kaw was one of the Ho-Chunk signers of the 1828 Treaty of Green Bay. The Treaty of Green Bay was negotiated in an attempt by the U.S. government to force several Indigenous nations of Wisconsin to cede land for lead mining. However, in the final treaty language, the Ho-Chunk only granted miners the right to travel through their lands (Case, 2018).

United States is a tool for reifying the logics of settler colonialism with each new generation. Ultimately, the chapter concludes by describing the research study and the chapters that follow.

Dewitt, Wisconsin: Settler Space / Indigenous Land

This is a settler space. Located in a well-manicured community park in the center of DeWitt, Wisconsin is a tiny hand-hewn log cabin. According to the accompanying historical marker, this cabin stands as a "visible reminder of the sacrifices made by early pioneers as they settled this area" (see Figure 1.1). The marker makes no mention of history before the arrival of the first permanent Euro-American settlers who built this cabin in 1837. Searching for evidence in the small public library shortly after relocating to DeWitt, the lone volume of local history, compiled during the town's sesquicentennial in 1987, bluntly, though erroneously, stated: "There seems to be no record of any permanent Indian settlement located at [DeWitt] before the coming of the Whiteman" ([DeWitt] Sesquicentennial, 1987). Likewise, the DeWitt Community Historical Society, located in a restored 1843 cobblestone house that once anchored a 500-acre farm, makes no reference to Indigenous history or presence on this land. DeWitt is a settler space.

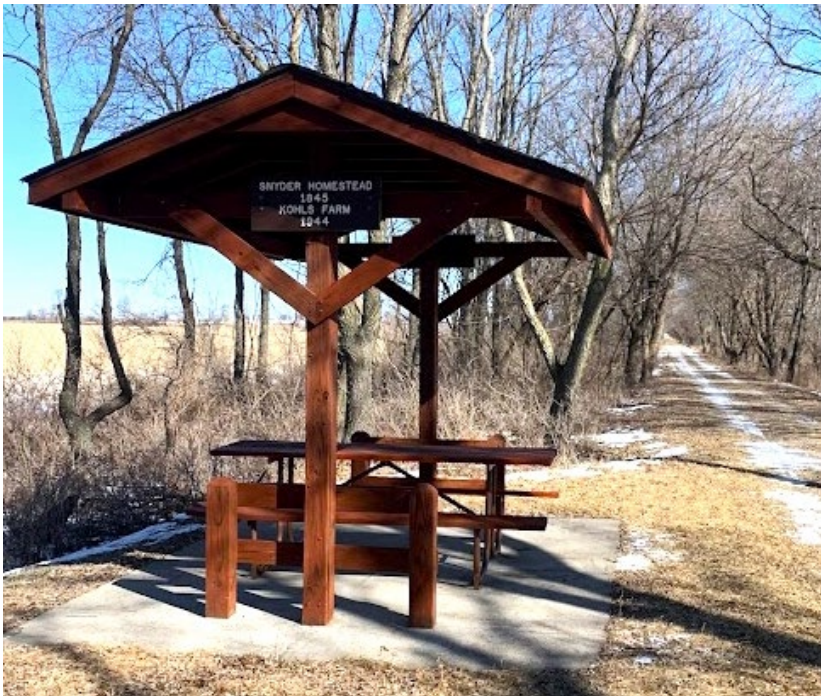
Figure 1.1 – Photograph of The Skavlem–Williams Log Cabin historical site located in DeWitt, Wisconsin. The marker states: "This structure of hand-hewn oak stood on the farm of Mr. & Mrs. Henry Williams. It was erected during the 1830's [sic] by Erick and Ragnhild Skavlem. It now stands as a visible reminder of the sacrifices made by early pioneers as they settled this area" (Author's photograph)



DeWitt, like settler communities across the United States, has a long history and deep collective memory of misrepresenting or erasing Indigenous peoples from the land and narratives. Though one might more readily imagine such misrepresentation or erasure to be the work of grand national narratives, the construction and (re)presentation of local histories, in particular, serve as a powerful force in the continued (re)creation of settler spaces. The practice of memorializing first settlers and settler firsts (i.e., settler accomplishments and institutions) through monuments and local histories while simultaneously writing Indigenous peoples out of existence is what Jean O'Brien (2010) referred to as "replacement narratives" or the process of "firsting and lasting" (p. 55). According to O'Brien, "firsting" is a claim "that non-Indians were the first people to erect the proper institutions of a social order worthy of notice" (p. xii); thus, providing a narrative that established Euro-Americans as the logical possessors of the land.

Nowhere in DeWitt are the true first nations or the genocidal violence that preceded or accompanied these settler "firsts" acknowledged. Reminders of settler "firsts" on the landscape have become so banal they belie settler violence (see Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2 – Photograph of a rest area on a nature trail in DeWitt. The plaque reads: "Snyder Homestead 1845 / Kohl's Farm 1944" (Author's photograph).



This is Indigenous land. To be clear, though unacknowledged in settler narratives, the Village and Township of DeWitt, Wisconsin are located on the traditional and ancestral Homeland of Ho-Chunk people who have lived on these lands since time immemorial. Of what is today south-central Wisconsin, Amy

Lonetree (2011) wrote: "These lands bear the mark of our lives and the graves of our ancestors" (p. 15). In addition to the Ho-Chunk, many Indigenous nations and peoples have called southern Wisconsin home. The Bodéwadmiakiwen (*Potawatomi*)[2], Ho-Chunk (*Winnebago*), Kiikaapoi (*Kickapoo*), Meshkwahkihaki (*Fox*), Myaamiaki (*Miami*), Peouaroua (*Peoria*), and oθaakiiwaki (*Sauk or Sac*) nations have raised and educated their children, planted corn and other crops, hunted and trapped, built effigy burial mounds for their deceased relatives, and stewarded this land for generations before the first permanent white Euro-American settlers arrived here in 1837.

This land, along with large swaths of land in southern Wisconsin and Illinois, was ceded in the Treaty of St. Louis between the United States and representatives of the oθaakiiwaki and Meshkwahkihaki nations in 1804. The Treaty of St. Louis marks the beginning of a nearly 30-year period of genocidal violence aimed at removing Indigenous peoples from the land of what is today southern Wisconsin. This violence culminated with the Black Hawk War of 1832. Ma-ka-tai-me-she-kia-kiak (*Black Hawk*), an oθaakiiwaki leader who bitterly resented the relocation of his people from along the Rock River in Illinois and Wisconsin to Iowa Indian Territory, led an ill-fated military campaign against U.S. government forces and local militias in northern Illinois and southern Wisconsin in the spring and summer of 1832.

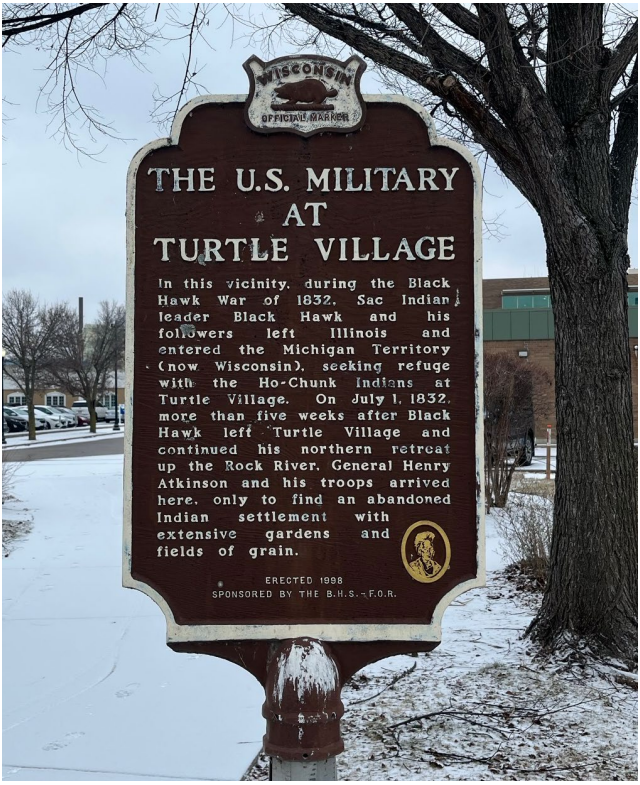
[2] The American Psychological Association's (2019) *Publication Manual, Seventh Edition* states that italics should be used to denote "the first use of a word, phrase, or abbreviation from another language when readers may not be familiar with it" (p. 272). Throughout the paper, I chose not to italicize–thus, rendering foreign–words and terms in Indigenous languages. Alternatively, to emphasize that English is a colonial and foreign language within the Americas, I have italicized the English translations of words and phrases from Indigenous languages.

Remarkably, both Abraham Lincoln and Jefferson Davis fought in the war, along with seven future U.S. Senators, four future Illinois governors; future governors of Michigan, Nebraska, and the Wisconsin Territory; and two future U.S. presidents: Taylor and Lincoln. The aftermath of the war gave teeth to the Indian Removal Act of 1830 and resulted in the expulsion of many Ho-Chunk and other Indigenous peoples. The war and subsequent expulsion directly led to the creation of the city of Chicago, with a fledgling population of barely 200 Euro-Americans, in 1833, just one year after the end of the war. The Black Hawk War also cleared the rich farmland of southern Wisconsin for white settlement.

Local histories of the Black Hawk War rarely discuss the violence perpetrated by the U.S. military and militiamen, who outnumbered the oθaakiiwaki ten to one (Jung, 2007). Rather, historical markers recount U.S. soldiers chasing the oθaakiiwaki and their Ho-Chunk allies across the landscape seemingly without any violence being perpetrated. One marker stated: "General Henry Atkinson and his troops arrived [in the Ho-Chuck village of Turtle Creek], only to find an abandoned Indian settlement with extensive gardens and fields of grain" (see Figure 1.3). Such white settler recasting of history is what Rick Lybeck (2020) has termed "white public pedagogy," or the desire for settlers to publicly avoid discussions of violence and the power structures and imbalances that allowed whites to ultimately wrest land from the original Indigenous inhabitants and perpetuate inequalities that exist to this day. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) have termed such narratives "settler moves to innocence," or "those strategies or positionings that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility" (p. 10). In his surrender speech, Ma-ka-tai-me-

she-kia-kiak stated: “An Indian, who is as bad as the white men, could not live in our nation” (Jung, 2007, p. 173).

Figure 1.3 – Photograph of the “The U.S. Military at Turtle Village” historical marker near DeWitt, Wisconsin. The marker states: “In this vicinity, during the Black Hawk War of 1832, Sac Indian leader Black Hawk and his followers left Illinois and entered the Michigan Territory (now Wisconsin), seeking refuge with the Ho-Chunk Indians at Turtle Village. On July 1, 1832, more than five weeks after Black Hawk left Turtle Village and continued his northern retreat up the Rock River, General Henry Atkinson and his troops arrived here, only to find an abandoned Indian settlement with extensive gardens and fields of grain” (Author’s photograph).



In the immediate wake of the Black Hawk War, an impatient U.S. government hastily concluded two treaties in 1832 and 1833 with the Ho-Chunk and Bodéwadmiakiwen, respectively, who each ceded their claims to ancestral land that included the area that would soon become DeWitt, Wisconsin. Despite the terms of the 1832 treaty, many Ho-Chunk refused to leave Wisconsin for the so-called "Neutral Ground" in northern Iowa, forcing the U.S. government to negotiate an additional treaty in 1837 and subsequently prompting the forced removal of many Ho-Chunk, what Lonetree (2011) referred to as "deliberate acts of ethnic cleansing and genocide" (p. 15). However, in an act of what Gerald Vizenor (1999) has referred to as "survivance," or "an active sense of presence" on the land (p. vii), some Ho-Chunk remained in or returned to Wisconsin through the mid-nineteenth century. These Ho-Chunk continued to occupy their ancestral land in defiance of the U.S. government, facing several more attempts at forced removal until an act of congress in 1881 ultimately allotted 40-acre plots to the remaining Ho-Chunk. Today, as a result of this allotment, Ho-Chunk lands are scattered in a patchwork across 12 counties in south-central Wisconsin (Lonetree, 2011; Loew, 2001).[3]

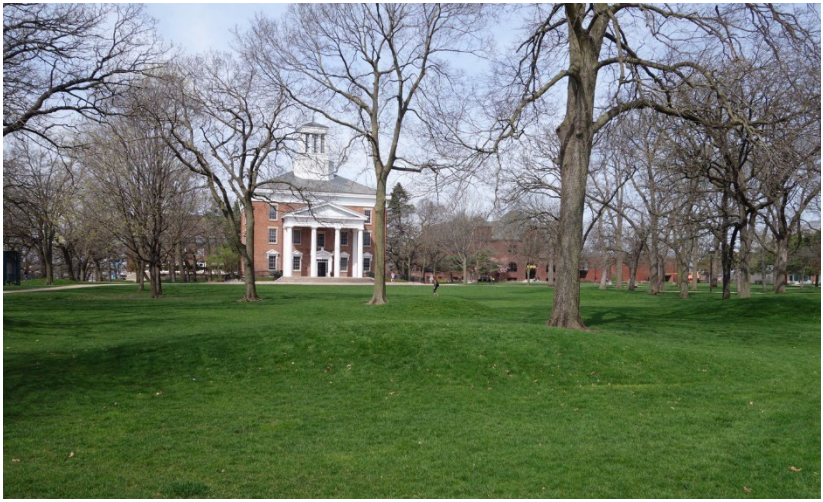
[3] To construct a brief history of the Ho-Chunk and the period of treaty-making and Indigenous removal during the nineteenth century, I have relied on Patty Loew's (2001; 2015) *Indian Nations of Wisconsin*., as opposed to Nancy Oestereich Lurie's (1970; 2002) *Wisconsin Indians* (revised and updated by Francis Paul Prucha). Both volumes are recommended for teachers and students by the Wisconsin Historical Society. While both works present critical narratives of Indigenous Wisconsin, Lurie and Prucha, both non-Indigenous scholars, offered a more traditional narrative based on archival research. In contrast, Loew, an enrolled member of the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Ojibwe, centered Indigenous voices and perspectives in her narrative. Throughout, given the topic of this research, I have attempted to prioritize and center Indigenous scholarship and voices whenever possible. See the additional section at the end of the introduction on citational practices.

Ho-Chunk tradition states: “We have always been here.” This history of violence and removal, although occurring at the same time as the Trail of Tears, is lesser known both nationally and locally in Wisconsin and Illinois and rarely framed as genocide in local or national historical accounts.

By the 1830s, with the removal of most of the Indigenous peoples from east of the Mississippi River and the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, which greatly expanded migration to the Midwest and facilitated the transportation of agricultural goods from the prairies to the hungry cities in the East, a permanent Euro-American settlement was established called DeWitt Corners. Early settlers, arriving from New York State, named the town after the former Governor of New York and one-time Presidential hopeful, DeWitt Clinton, who led the construction of the Erie Canal. Within a few decades, two competing railroads laid tracks that intersected in DeWitt, bringing further settlement and relative prosperity to the small community. Early settlers and their descendants plowed the rich farmland, burying most evidence of Indigenous presence on the land and with it any memories of the violence that had marked the period of so-called “Indian removal.” Today, the remnants of effigy burial mounds, said by anthropologists to have been built by an otherwise nameless “Late Woodland people" between 400 and 1200 CE, serve as the only evidence of Indigenous presence on the land, resulting in the erasure of nearly 1000 years of Indigenous peoples, histories, cultures, and contemporary realities from the land and collective memory (Birmingham & Rankin, 1996). In contrast to these settler narratives, Ho-Chunk tradition states: “We have always been here.” Patty Loew (2001) wrote: “[T]hese mounds are the very key to understanding the cosmology of the culture that built them - the people the Ho-

Chunk call 'ancestors'" (p. 6). Indeed, it is the Ho-Chunk that built the elaborate burial mounds, some of which were spared the plow and still dot the landscape of southern Wisconsin, especially along the banks of the Rock River.

Figure 1.4 – Ho-Chunk burial mound on the campus of Beloit College: Beloit, Wisconsin (Photograph Christopher Mazza, 2016).



DeWitt is a settler space constructed on Indigenous land. Settler spaces are colonial constructs, both physical and ideological creations, erected on the bloody soils of mass violence and genocide. They are predicated on and advanced through narratives that expound settler supremacy as both manifest and destiny. The construction of settler spaces also works simultaneously to erase, in whole or in part, Indigenous peoples, cultures, histories, and contemporary realities from the land and narrative. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985) referred to the creation of colonized space as "worlding the world," or the process through which (settler) colonizers encounter a world that is

seemingly unwritten or blank where they can inscribe themselves. Worlding is predicated on a settler cosmography, or a colonial mapping and (re)ordering of the world in the colonizer's image and to suit his or her needs (though the image of a colonizer is often that of a man, such as a soldier or colonial official, women, especially teachers, function as powerful agents of colonialism). Worlding serves to disguise the true nature and inner workings of colonization from the colonizers and, in some cases, the colonized themselves. Imperial education or public schooling serves as a primary tool of worlding within the settler colonial nation-state. Each new generation of students is not only taught the colonial order but often becomes complicit in its (re)production and maintenance. Teachers, themselves once students of and within the very systems they now serve, function as agents and ideological foot soldiers on the frontier of the settler colonial nation-state.

The role of schooling in worlding the nineteenth-century United States was masterfully illustrated by Prussian-born romantic painter John Gast in his 1872 painting, *American Progress*. The painting depicted the figure of Columbia, adorned with the star of empire, sweeping across the American landscape from east to west. With her, Colombia is ushering waves of settlers, the telegraph and railroads, and the very light of civilization. Meanwhile, Indigenous peoples, the buffalo, and the darkness of ignorance and barbarism are driven ever westward to their ultimate oblivion. As is the case with many settler narratives, the genocidal violence accompanying nineteenth-century expansion and settlement is nowhere to be found in the scene. Often uncritically, Gast's painting has been reproduced in many generations of U.S. history textbooks to illustrate the concept of

manifest destiny or the widespread belief that Euro-American settlers were entitled to control the land of what is today North America.

Since the late eighteenth century, Columbia has been the national personification of the United States. Derived from an imagined notion of Christopher Columbus, in its earliest usage, Columbia often referred to the thirteen colonies and later the United States or the whole of the Americas (Schlereth, 1992). Columbia became a common name for places, streets, and institutions across the United States, including Columbia County, which lies just north of DeWitt. Though the earlier depictions of Columbia often showed her in stereotypical, imagined Indigenous dress, such as adorned with a feathered headdress (see Figure 1.5), later depictions often represented Columbia as a Euro-American, as in Gast's painting.

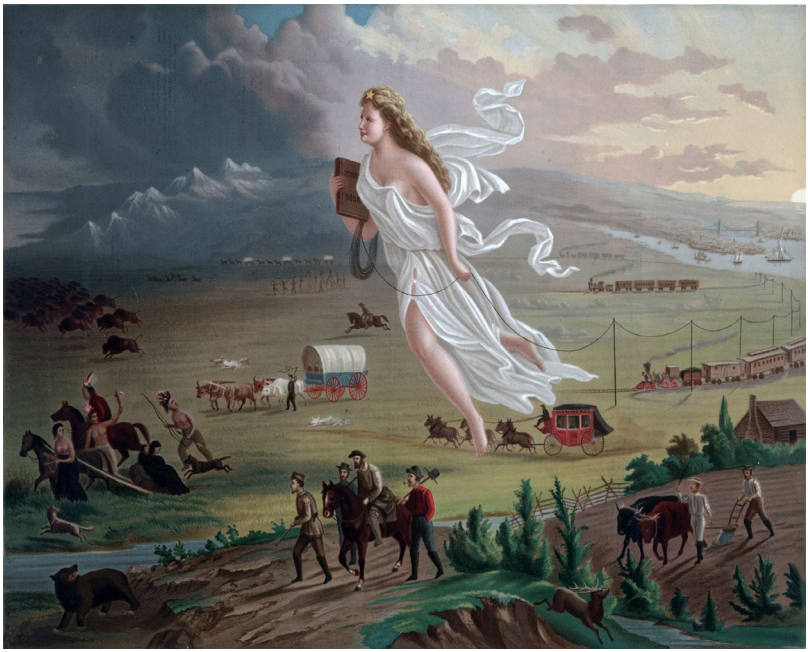
In *American Progress*, Columbia cradles a book to her bosom. What might initially be mistaken for the Christian Bible is instead, upon closer inspection, revealed to be a *School Book* (see figure 1.6). Thus, Columbia can also be understood as a personification of a schoolmarm, dutifully discharging her duties in the service of the settler colonial nation-state. White women teacher-saviors have long been depicted as "Lady Bountiful," who according to Harper and Cavanagh (1994) is "a representation of the white lady missionary or white lady teacher […] an embodiment of chastity and purity who acted as a 'civilizing force'" (p. 28). To this day, the work of the modern public school teaching force, which remains largely white and female,[4] is one of civilizing students and

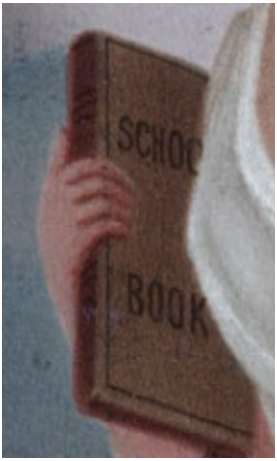
[4] According to the Pew Research Center, there are roughly 3.8 million public school teachers in the United States; of whom, 74.3 percent are women and 79 percent are white (Schaeffer, 2024).

(re)presenting the ideals of the nation. In DeWitt, like most rural settler spaces, the public school serves as the center of the community, and the role of the teacher is simultaneously deeply revered and heavily supervised, lest teachers fail to discharge their quasi-sacred duties in service of the settler state.

Figure 1.5 – Statue of Freedom, which sits stop the U.S. Capitol Dome, depicting a female personification of the United States in a feathered headdress (Image, Library of Congress).

Figure 1.6 – John Gast's 1872 *American Progress* and close-up image of the book in the painting that states "School Book" (Image, Library of Congress).





Researching Genocide Education in DeWitt

I moved to DeWitt, Wisconsin in July of 2020 to take a position teaching secondary social studies at the local junior-senior high school. Though the move was precipitated by a myriad of factors driven by both choice and chance, not least of which being the COVID-19 pandemic, I was drawn to this rural community by the opportunity to develop and teach a high school genocide and human rights elective course.

A fifteen-year veteran educator, this would be the third school in which I developed and taught such a course. My journey as a genocide educator began in my first year as a teacher, when I was tasked by a principal to develop and teach a Holocaust history elective course. Over the ensuing 15 years, through much personal and professional growth and development, the course became one focused not solely on the Holocaust but on comparative genocide education, or a study of multiple cases of genocide and, especially, the similarities and differences among them. My objectives to create informed and engaged students who sought to ameliorate current mass violence; prevent future genocides; and promote tolerance, democratic values, human rights, and justice within society drove me to include narratives of Indigenous genocide in the course.

This journey–learning, teaching, and researching about genocide, especially Indigenous genocide and settler colonialism–saw me develop both personally and professionally into a critical pedagogue and researcher. More so than other areas of social studies education, such as world history or human geography, teaching about genocide was a space in which my students and I

could explore critical content and pedagogy. However, as I sought out more professional development around genocide from organizations like the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM), I came to realize that my course was the exception.

Genocide education in the United States is still mostly just Holocaust education. Although becoming more common in the past decade, it is still unlikely that American middle or high school students will learn about so-called "other genocides," such as the Armenian, Cambodian, or Rwandan. Rarer still are narratives of Indigenous (Native American) and Black (African American) genocides, and local histories of Indigenous genocide, such as the 1832 Black Hawk War, remain particularly elusive in public school curricula and classrooms and non-existent in genocide education.

While much genocide education in the United States shares similar stated objectives to those of my course–advancing tolerance, fostering democratic values, promoting human rights, and seeking justice–the conspicuous exclusion of Indigenous genocide presents an obstacle to achieving such goals. To pose a provocative question: what would it mean for genocide education in Germany to exclude the Holocaust? Similarly, what does it mean to teach about the Holocaust or genocide(s) in the United States and exclude Indigenous genocide? This question compelled me to enter a Ph.D. program in Curriculum and Instruction and Social Studies Education at the University of Minnesota, and having completed my coursework, I make DeWitt the site of my dissertation research which had otherwise been disrupted due to the global pandemic.

In the following chapters, I chart my journey as a high school social studies educator teaching a comparative genocide studies course at DeWitt Junior-Senior High School during the 2021-2022 school year. This is the highly personal narrative of me and my students' attempts unsettle traditional Holocaust and genocide education in the United States to include narratives of Indigenous and Black genocides. This research progresses from two premises: (a) the difficult knowledge that the United States is a settler colonial nation-state that, as such, was established through and maintained by genocidal violence. Settler colonialism is the organizing logic or set of principles within settler colonial societies, in which, unlike under other forms and instances of colonialism, Euro-American colonizers (often termed settlers) removed Indigenous inhabitants, settled (stolen) Indigenous lands, and have sought to occupy these lands in perpetuity and (b) Institutions like public schooling (e.g., curricula and classroom teaching) have been historically and are still used as tools of colonization and continued occupation of the land. As such, genocide education in the United States is undertaken wittingly or unwittingly often in service of maintaining the settler colonial nation-state.

Additionally, in an effort to better understand the contemporary landscape of genocide education and contextualize my own course, I also interviewed eight teachers across the United States who taught similar comparative genocide studies courses or units. Like myself, many teachers and students, especially white teachers and students, are invariably invested in schooling as a means to maintain the status quo in settler spaces such as DeWitt, Wisconsin. Holocaust and genocide education, despite often being undertaken with the lofty goals of teaching tolerance, engendering democratic citizenship, promoting human rights, and advancing

social justice frequently fails to acknowledge, let alone address, histories and legacies of mass violence in the United States. Despite this, I hold out hope that genocide education can be a space for individual and social transformation in spaces like DeWitt. Thus, the following narrative is, in multiple senses of the word, unsettling.

In the broadest sense, this book attempted to chart my and students' experiences of teaching and learning about genocide, mass violence, and human rights in DeWitt, Wisconsin, a settler space located on Indigenous land. In the fall of 2021, in my second year as a high school social studies teacher at the DeWitt Junior-Senior High School, I developed and taught an elective course, Genocide and Human Rights, for 27 high school sophomores, juniors, and seniors. Although contextualized within the school and community of DeWitt, this research is centered around this course, particularly how the students and I individually and collectively took up teaching and learning about instances and structures of mass violence in the United States and Wisconsin. Contextualized within a broader comparative genocide studies approach, the course centered settler colonialism and the genocide of Indigenous peoples in the United States during the nineteenth century, as well as the legacies of this violence. Additionally, this study sought to understand how I, a non-Indigenous white male heterosexual cis-gendered social studies teacher, navigated teaching about settler colonialism and the genocide of Indigenous peoples in a settler space (see, e.g., Dalbo, 2021). Ultimately, how might we, both students and I, engage with/in unsettling narratives in the context of studying the genocide of Indigenous peoples within the United States?

Explaining this research to a colleague and fellow social studies teacher, I framed the research question as: "What happens when we try to put Indigenous genocide next to the Holocaust or Rwandan genocide; how will students respond?" My colleague's response was a terse and skeptical question: "In *this* community?"[5] To be sure, teaching and learning about the genocide of Indigenous peoples are what scholars have termed "difficult history" (Sheppard, 2010a), or those local and national histories of violence that conflict with grand narratives of American exceptionalism. In addition, settler colonialism not only serves as a framework through which the long and ongoing histories and legacies of genocidal violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples in the United States can be further understood and articulated, but it also becomes a lens through which I analyzed students' and my own perceived struggles and successes in teaching about Indigenous genocide.

This research relies on both case study (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2011) and practitioner research, specifically self-study (Johnston, 2006; Loughran & Northfield, 1998; Zeichner, 1999). In short, it is a study about my praxis within the semester -Genocide and Human Rights course. Self-study methodology and methods, in particular, became the vehicle for both data collection and analysis. Johnston (2006) wrote: "In a self-study, the focus is on the self who practices - the content, context, and nature of a teacher's activity" (p. 61).

[5] Throughout, all quotes are derived from my fieldnotes (e.g., personal teaching-research journal), interviews, students written work, or personal communications. In some cases, I have made slight changes to grammar to improve readability, while preserving the original meaning.