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Author

Cuéllar, Jorge E.

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Elimination/Deracination: Colonial Terror, La Matanza, and the 1930s Race Laws in El Salvador

Jorge E. Cuéllar

In the late hours of January 22, 1932, thousands of *campesinos* and Indigenous people in western El Salvador rose up in rebellion against the authoritarian regime of General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez.¹ Responding to the superexploitation² and stricter demands on labor resulting from the local effects of the global Great Depression, *campesinos* and Indians alike targeted the haciendas of well-known big landowners and military garrisons. The rebellion had all the characteristics of a nineteenth-century colonial uprising under Spanish rule, with the economic depression creating added motives for social unrest against the local oligarchic-military structure.³ Armed with only rocks, sticks, and *corbos* (machetes), the rebels secured control over Juayúa, Nahuizalco, Izalco, and Tacuba—historically Indigenous territory.⁴ The government reacted almost immediately following the capture of these territories, unleashing a frontal extermination campaign against the rebels to force their surrender to the power of the central government and ensure the elimination of all insurrectionary elements. Civilian patrols composed largely of ladinos and the National Guard executed the orders of Martínez to their logical conclusion.⁵ The humbly armed *campesinos* were no match for the military might of the Martínez government, leading to waves of Indians being slaughtered by gunfire, enforced by a repressive government-military apparatus of modernized communication, transport, and weaponry. Within a few days, to recover the lost territories they indiscriminately killed somewhere between 10,000 to 40,000 Indigenous people and *campesinos*—in effect, engaging in a campaign of “colonial terror” to quell dissent and restore social order: La Matanza.

JORGE E. CUÉLLAR is currently Andrew W. Mellon Postdoctoral Fellow in the Humanities at Dartmouth College with an appointment in the Department of Latin American, Latino, and Caribbean Studies. He is currently working on a book manuscript that traces the practices of peoplehood, community, and everyday life amongst marginalized groups in contemporary El Salvador.

This 1932 campaign of colonial terror and the race laws that emerged in the aftermath of La Matanza are exemplary if we are to understand the settler-colonial mode that underpins contemporary Salvadoran state governance. In this article, La Matanza is understood as a Benjaminian monad: a crystallization of accumulated extreme, usually violent, past events that share characteristics with colonial asymmetries, erasures, and violences that compose the history of Central America as a region.⁶ In other words, La Matanza both reveals a symptom and stands as a synecdochic moment that condensed key features of a historical relationship structured on race and inequality. Analyzing this history through settler colonialism allows us to glimpse how this substratum of violence has since routinized civil strife and discord in the collective memory of Indigenous groups going at least as far back as the 1930s, or even earlier.

Building from the work of scholars who have highlighted the important ethnic dimensions of 1932, this essay argues throughout that there is a settler-colonial dynamic at the heart of the Indigenous movement's rise and its concomitant state response. Salvadoranists have examined the economic pressures leading up to the massacre and have drawn out key narratives regarding the historical cycle that ends with the close of the 1980s civil war; however, the objective here is, in a different register, to understand the "settler colonial" character of the massacre through the notion of colonial terror to better account for the racial formation of this historical moment. My aim is to make perceptible, through the lens of colonial terror, those sedimented deposits of historical meaning that, once uncovered, can allow us to perceive the alternative political imaginations that once mobilized ethnic land-based struggles in 1930s El Salvador.

The events of 1930s El Salvador signal a turning point, the rising of an Indigenous social movement that had attempted to discredit the legitimacy of the nation-state through a variety of linked initiatives. The brutal slaughter at the hands of the repressive state overdetermined the settler-colonial reality and its unremitting drive towards Indigenous elimination. Likewise, the political climate that emerged in 1932's aftermath demonstrated the retreat of Indigenous politics from the public sphere; public displays of Indigenous dress and language were apparently abandoned as the result of outward hostility and social shaming; Afro-descendants were legally expelled from the national territory; proletarianization accelerated with the advent of agro-industrialization and the fierce deracination caused by mestizo nationalism; and already limited communal landholdings were eroded by the rise of individual property and increasing privatization.

In remembering 1932, this essay contributes more broadly by drawing attention to a contemporary moment in which temporal boundaries between past and present that are usually taken for granted have reached a crisis. The national, "universal" pasts that, once hegemonic, had anchored meanings of the present while actively contributing to imagining the future, have now entered into disrepair. As Andreas Huyssen reminds us, it is the memory of social and political traumas that serve as a site to keep alive the ghosts of a restless past.⁷ The multiple meanings of 1932—a communist insurrection, a *campesino* revolt, an Indigenous rebellion—are all nationally domesticated narratives that point to three determinations that: (1) the colonization of indigeneity itself became central to the project of the national; (2) the debris of La Matanza is evidence of direct and unjust violence against racialized populations (including

Afro-descendants); and (3) all consequent struggles by invisibilized Indigenous populations are defined by their campaign against recurrent waves of this paradigmatic instance of colonial terror. Despite some national government attention to curbing excessive ladino abuses after the massacre, nonetheless Indigenous peoples continued to lead lives in conditions of misery, placed into a racial matrix that reinforced their political marginality, racial inferiority, and singular use as cheap labor for the *hacendado* class of large landholders.⁸ The events of 1932 and the 1933 race laws mark a pivotal moment, not only for El Salvador but for the region itself, one that demonstrates the linkages of the peripheral nation to the global economic system, as well as how the local struggles for social and labor control are expressions of the active unfolding of settler colonialism in early twentieth-century Central America.

The effects of these struggles, especially the contributions by Indigenous peoples in the country, remain underappreciated and unknown in the popular imaginary, relegating their presence to a footnote in national history. The study of Native populations in El Salvador has largely been only of anthropological and archaeological curiosity, from the role of *cacique* Anastasio Aquino, who led an Indigenous uprising in 1833, to that of Prudencia Ayala, an Indigenous woman who bid for the presidency of El Salvador in 1930, while the present laboring lives and political contributions of Indigenous peoples remain outside of both official recordkeeping and historical writing. For example, programs of early twentieth-century nation-building aimed at mestizo citizenship of Indigenous and Afro-descendant cultures simultaneously promoted cultural appropriation and cultural negation. Because racial and cultural identity was believed to be soluble in settler social space, tracking the general population's racial composition was deemed to be uninteresting and irrelevant, as Virginia Tilley points out.⁹ Persuaded by racist anthropology of the period, national history, social studies, and the administrative bureaucracy of the country largely depended on eugenicist thinking.

First, I will center the figure of Feliciano Ama in the narrative of the 1932 Izalco insurrection in order to concretely understand the dynamics of the political and historical terrain vis-à-vis its ethnopolitics, the multiple dimensions that led to the massacre itself, and its historically underemphasized Indigenous leadership. Second, I reflect on the acts of the government in brutally quelling the dissent of Indigenous peoples in the region as an act of settler-colonial violence, whose precise character was, as scholars such as Carlos López Bernal, Erik Ching, Jeffrey Gould, and Virginia Tilley have correctly signaled, an instance of deliberate ethnocide.¹⁰ I then turn to the historical role of Afro-descendant peoples in the 1930s as a result of what I call the "Salvadoran race laws" and in the actual events of the 1932 uprising. Finally, in assessing elimination and deracination, the twin logics of settler colonialism in El Salvador, the closing reflects on the efficacy of settler colonialism as a theoretical framework for understanding Salvadoran state-formation in the 1930s.

Beyond the historical narrative advanced by the abovementioned scholars and others, it is critical to go a step further and examine the assumptions, values, and logics that animated the response by the Martínez government and the powerful resonances of its racial ideology throughout Salvadoran society in the immediate aftermath. It does not suffice to explain that targeted ethnic violence took place in a moment of

economic downturn without advancing an analysis of the project of settler-colonial state formation that Martínez was himself undertaking, as well as concerted strategies to discipline the Indigenous-*campesino* workforce and Afro-descendant populations. Though the anticommunist character of the Martínez regime is well-recognized and accounted for in the literature, its anti-Indigenous and, further, its anti-black impetus is less apparent as they oftentimes appear contradictory to the stated aims of Martínez's populist reformism.¹¹

This episode in Salvadoran history is not only a turning point for inaugurating the authoritarian regimes that would follow and characterize state rule for the next fifty years or for its importance to the United States' hemispheric ambitions in prompting a shift to its imperial policy towards Central America,¹² but perhaps more troubling and immediate, it would serve as an ever-present reminder of the subservience and marginality of ethnic communities for those living within the national territory itself. The massacre served as a powerful site for race-making, transforming unresolved racial and class differences into set antagonisms. Like Achille Mbembe reminds us, this event had the profound and enduring effect of "writing on the ground a new set of social and spatial relations" for all ethnic relations within the body politic.¹³

Rethinking La Matanza in light of simultaneous anti-Indigenous and anti-black attempts at social control contributes to a deeper understanding of the biopolitical characteristics of settler colonialism and its historical unfolding in Central America. Through a reexamination of this moment of ethnic violence in a period of paradoxical liberal reform and the rise of authoritarianism, we may better understand the long-standing clash of the divergent ethnonational visions that characterize the violence of the period, one proffered by the liberal military state, the other via the politics central to a subaltern uprising.

A TALE OF TWO REBELLIONS

The mainstream narrative of 1932 recounts the emergence of Agustín Farabundo Martí, the *campesino* revolutionary and member of the Salvadoran Communist Party who, alongside his comrades, led the uprising against General Hernández Martínez. Ultimately captured by government forces, Martí faced a hasty war tribunal and was condemned to death. Executed a week after the initial rebellion on February 1, 1932, he was memorialized as a martyr, the emblematic center of the Salvadoran left in a struggle that would later be resumed by the clandestine revolutionary movement in the 1980s with moral and logistical support from Cuba. By the 1920s however, the *colono* system whereby workers received plots of land for subsistence cultivation in exchange for their labor had almost completely eroded, replaced by a brutal regime of wage labor.¹⁴ The newfound lack of subsistence cultivation created a sizable population of landless workers and a much more varied and differentially marginalized labor pool now compelled to enter the workforce. The landless workers included Indigenous peoples, poor *campesinos*, women, children, and others. In effect, the introduction of wage labor into El Salvador as the dominant form of economic relations created new problems that, alongside the continual expansion of the coffee plantations, encroached

on those few remaining *campesino* and Indigenous landholdings where the stability previously afforded by the decentralized *colono* system remained possible.

Increasingly concentrating land in the hands of a few large families, this growing landholding disparity both prompted and actively reproduced inequality along racial and ethnic lines, contributing to the well-circulated narrative of oligarchic rule in El Salvador by the so-called “fourteen families”—vernacular shorthand for the coffee elite. Small-scale farmers and those groups who previously enjoyed the possibility of securing their own farming plots were pushed onto low-quality lands that made their subsistence increasingly precarious. Although Aldo Lauria-Santiago finds that in some places communal agricultural practices were able to successfully transform and compete in highly individualized commercial agriculture throughout the nineteenth century, such as the Chalchuapa coffee zone of northwestern El Salvador, this situation was an exception not experienced by the country’s majority.¹⁵ The reality of Izalco more accurately fits the wider narrative of communal land erosion that generated massive numbers of immiserated, landless populations under settler-colonial modes of biopolitical control and territorial alienation. Thus, in the early 1930s, the roots of rebellion can be said to be triangulated by the popular struggle for land, hunger, and securing the means for social reproduction.

The other, oft-forgotten component of the rebellion was the one led by a contemporary of Farabundo Martí and a more central historical figure in the insurrection, the local Izalqueño *cacique*, Feliciano Ama. Ama and the Indigenous communities of Los Izalcos stood against the emergent urban-rural security apparatus in early-twentieth-century El Salvador that heavily policed Indigenous populations in coffee-growing areas of western El Salvador at the behest of the agrarian elite. Like Indigenous leaders before him who fought against the encroachment of wealthy landowners that slowly chipped away at communal landholdings, Ama led a band of armed Pipil Indians towards the regional capital of Sonsonate to capture the departmental seat of power and demand a stop to the encroachment on Indigenous lands.

While this moment is often conflated as one representing Indigenous support for the “armed struggle” strategies of Third International and the fight of *campesinos* in their quest for land reform, the Indigenous element was, perhaps more accurately, quite simply a tentative alliance organically forged in a moment of opportunity to enact comprehensive and redistributive land reform and for the restoration of communal Native landholdings. In fact, as Erik Ching suggests, the communist party was much too small and underdeveloped in 1932 to be the principal leader of an uprising of this size and magnitude. Organizing by the communists in Indigenous zones was difficult and largely unsuccessful, as it played on mistrust of ladinos who peddled suspicious ideas from outside their communities.¹⁶ The Indigenous wager was, if successful, to regain those dispossessed lands that their communities had previously lost from a combination of state repression and elite expropriation. Though it should be said that in this period the interests of mestizo *campesinos* appeared to coincide with the objectives of the Indigenous insurgency, there was a pronounced and underappreciated racial wedge between the groups that differently colored their long-term goals and visions of political and economic liberation.

Feliciano Ama was a Pipil Indian and day laborer from the region of Izalco. He was one of the many smallholders who was forcefully expropriated by wealthier, armed, and politically influential landowning families. Humiliated and emasculated by the loss of his source of livelihood, Ama would later become a prominent figure in the organized resistance against the continuous waves of encroachment led by the local planter class. He was a beloved local politician who fought for the communal rights of the Indigenous Izalcos to the frustration of many local ladinos. The insurrection that preceded La Matanza was initially meant to be a display of power demonstrating the continual indignation caused by the lack of labor opportunities and social and political marginalization, with only certain individuals targeted directly by the violence, such as local shopkeepers who cheated the local population, particularly egregious racists, and politicians, among others. Rather than a frontal attack on the Salvadoran state, the insurrection was, as the low number of ladino deaths attest, a demonstration of Indigenous power against *local* inequalities and racisms that defined their everyday indignation. However, the professionalization of rural and urban forces into the National Guard¹⁷ would play an instrumental role that doomed the outcome of the 1932 insurrection from the start. The rebels' inferior firepower and lack of military strategy resulted in a one-sided bloodbath.

Ama emerged as a leader from one of the local *cofradías*, Corpus Christi. *Cofradías* were religious brotherhoods that served as sites of community formation since before the establishment of the Spanish colony. Prior to formal colonialism, *cofradías* used to be incubators for Indigenous knowledge, local structures of governance, and leadership formation, and in some ways partially continued serving this purpose. In large part, the *cofradías* have been one of the primary reasons why some very few communal landholdings still remain in the region of Izalco, and a source of local power for Indigenous communities. Surviving the colony, the *cofradías* were transformed into Catholic brotherhoods named after their patron saints that signaled their devotion: Jesus of Nazareth, St. Michael Archangel, Our Lady of the Assumption, and others. These were organizations built by family ties, their generational power and influence transmitted from older members to younger ones through local rites and practices that, though largely Catholic in their form and function, integrated Indigenous belief systems as well.

The *cofradías* proved to be a generative site of religious syncretism that fused Catholicism with Pipil cosmologies that, in turn, functioned as sources of empowerment in the face of a changing, increasingly Spanish ladino world. As the anthropologist Carlos Lara Martínez notes, the modern *cofradía* was established to foment the Catholic faith in the Native populations, similar to the Jesuit *reducciones* elsewhere in the Americas, though *cofradías* are much more autonomous.¹⁸ Since they engaged in independent teaching practices and, importantly, unsanctioned politico-religious development, these largely autonomous brotherhoods were routinely noted as being troublesome for local church hierarchies. From these organizations, which once numbered in the thousands, emerged *cacique* Ama, locally respected and vetted through the ranks of these longstanding social institutions that allowed him to garner influence, power, and prestige among the people of Los Izalcos. Being a local leader

hailing from the Indigenous classes and from the *cofradías*, Ama was, since the start of his political ascendancy, identified as a threat to local ladino rule.

Feliciano Ama's story is emblematic of the tragic story of Los Izalcos, embodying the struggle for survival and dignity for all Indigenous groups in El Salvador and the experience of other Indigenous people in El Salvador who were faced with the incessant needs of the coffee elite to expand its plantations in search of fertile soil. Ama, like countless other Indians, lost access to his communal landholdings and was brutally punished for any and all rebelliousness.

He was hanged by military forces on January 28, 1932 at about three in the afternoon from a ceiba tree, under the blazing heat of the Izalco sun. The level of spectacle and brutality in Ama's lynching was a result of reprisal from ladino communities that sought revenge for Ama's dissenting political opinions and continuous defiance. Ama's punishment exemplifies colonial terror, the brutality written on his body the material expression of the state's violent logic. Fingers, earlobes, and toes were removed from the bodies of Indigenous peoples who encountered a brutal disciplinary machine that sought to create a docile labor force wedded and subservient to almighty coffee. The torture inflicted on his body was a public spectacle aimed to realize a biopolitical imperative, an open and unambiguous display of colonial terror, aimed at disciplining the Indigenous classes.¹⁹

For Izalqueño elites and military officials stationed nearby, utilizing colonial terror was a key way to assert control over a diffuse, largely rural Native population. The Martínez government deliberately stationed military commander Cabrera, a well-known and outspoken racist, to police the local Indigenous population. Cabrera, along with dogs and plainclothes officers, led the party to locate and capture Ama who, after the events in Sonsonate, went into hiding. Cabrera was locally known as a strict disciplinarian, instilling in his troops the need to enforce a zero-tolerance policy that made no attempts at interrogation, at trials, or even imprisonment. Upon securing the rebel and other Indigenous insurgents, troops were directed to prepare the firing squad, force the accused to dig their own graves, and exterminate the opposition. This violence, which largely took the shape of a ladino military against a "rebellious" Indigenous population, echoed the colonial antagonism in all its historical asymmetry. This colonial antagonism became, for Indigenous peoples in Izalco, a kind of epistemological impression of lived inequality. Though relatively successful in achieving their goals of labor discipline and biopolitical control, the sense of humiliation that colonial terror instilled proved powerful in sowing discontent among Indigenous communities.

The purpose of sharing Ama's story is to underscore the genealogy of resistance central to Izalco life. Ama's visibility as a leader meant his execution amounted to an assault on Native tradition, leadership, and epistemology, and his death would reverberate in the Indigenous spirit moving forward. Nahuizalqueños have continually rebelled against the Salvadoran state for similar reasons that pressured their survival, rising up against the waves of enclosure perpetually centered on the appropriation of Indigenous landholdings, as well as in 1846, 1898, and other years.²⁰ The magnitude of the 1932 uprising echoes a previous insurrection a century prior led by *cacique* Anastasio Aquino, an Indigenous Nahua-Pipil leader from Santiago Nonualco, who,

after the bloody end of the short-lived rebellion in 1832, was captured, tried, and sentenced to death by decapitation. The story goes that his head was then placed in a cage with a sign that read "Example of a Rebel" to terrorize onlooking Natives into submission.²¹ As another example of linking indigeneity with the unruly, deviant, and rebellious, Aquino's head would be a constant reminder of past violence, and, of course, was very much present in the minds of the Indigenous Izalqueños who participated in revolt of 1932. For Indigenous Izalqueños who maintain their histories alive through oral teachings and ceremonies, it is reasonable to suggest that Ama's death recalled the execution of *cacique* Aquino and that these linked moments of punctual violence became reanimated in collective memory and imbued with a latent, ever-present colonial violence. Dating from this nineteenth-century moment through 1932, the Salvadoran republic was articulated as a violent clash of cultures, ladino against Indigenous. As La Matanza made clear, there would be no resistance to its worst excesses.

THE MEANING OF LA MATANZA

The rebellion would give birth to two, perhaps three, narratives of the national. The first was of national reconciliation and the recentralization of power by the Salvadoran state, whose control and legitimacy was reclaimed through the elimination of all dissident elements from the national territory. In fact, this elimination was so profound that it generated a second narrative of deracination, sometimes called "cultural *mestizaje*," which explains that through the project of national citizenship, all Indigenous peoples within El Salvador have been effectively eliminated, made mestizo, and ladinized. Indigeneity as a visible marker of ethnicity was violently scrubbed from the popular imagination, effectively demobilized, and all of its remaining elements incorporated in various ways so as to appear organic and intrinsic to what would be later formulated as the mestizo identity with, undoubtedly, its particular Salvadoran inflections.²²

As some Salvadoranists have noted, indigeneity as a pronounced public identity retreated into the domestic sphere, disappearing as a present, active, changing part of civic culture. Indigeneity as a cultural form in El Salvador became increasingly marginalized. For example, Indigenous artistic expression was reduced to a kind of artificial folklorism that apolitically referenced the national landscape and its agriculture as a colorful element of its proud peasantry. Though one can argue, to echo Javier Sanjinés C., that the persistence of indigeneity within these newly formed national vehicles of mythmaking and folklore can operate as a kind of "*mestizaje* upside-down," its practical effect was a forced abandonment and immediate reduction of the internal complexity and richness of Indigenous culture in El Salvador. What emerged, paradoxically, was a nationally enshrined indigeneity that favored abstractions far removed from the lived reality of those communities the nation purported to represent.²³ Thus, in the second post-La Matanza national narrative, indigeneity became instrumentalized by the Salvadoran state as a kind of folklorism, celebrating national expression as a marker of an Indigenous past that gave credibility to the liberal-derived principles, both symbolic and pragmatic, of the nation-state in the present.²⁴ In its simplification and

reductionism, indigeneity was likewise subsumed into larger narratives of *mestizaje* as the dominant and constitutive narrative of the new citizen-subject.

Thirdly, the experience of January 1932 highlights the workings of colonial terror, underscoring the set of rules upon which the wider society was organized, essentially using the hanging of the Indian Feliciano Ama as a site that visualized on his lifeless body the spectacular and self-evident power of *criollo* law and order. Swinging in the center of Izalco for all to see Ama's body became a reference point for all Indigenous peoples to abandon frontal politics against the increasingly professional and militarized Salvadoran state.²⁵ With the death of *cacique* Ama alongside thousands of other Indigenous men and women, the objective was to dissuade Indigenous peoples from engaging in further uprisings and limit their claims against the state. The aftermath of La Matanza augured a period where the avenues for registering grievances between Indians and ladinos was further formalized. Any Indian success registered through these official channels post-La Matanza, however, were counteracted with the emergence of civilian patrols that led to a culture of finger-pointing, gossip, and the settling of personal feuds that singled out and conflated indigeneity with armed insurrection. The post-La Matanza reality for Indigenous peoples was, in large part, harder and more taxing as a result of the failed insurrection that marked their phenotype and their ways of living as being inherently deviant and unruly.

In one of the only surviving photographs of him, a picture taken prior to his hanging, Ama is shown wearing a necktie, an uncharacteristic fashion choice for a Nahuizalqueño. Ama, writes Masin, usually dressed in the ordinary Indigenous garb of his time, a shirt and pants made of cloth, leather *caites*, a palm hat, and a slung *matata* over his shoulder.²⁶ Masin notes that Ama was forced by the firing squad to wear a necktie prior to his hanging. It appears to have been a deliberate effort to humiliate Ama, suggesting that the military cared about the creation of martyrs, about the discursive afterlife of Ama's image. Contributing to the optics of Indigenous assimilation and terror geared towards contemporary and future Native communities, Ama's body was left hanging on the mythical *ceiba* in highly trafficked central Izalco, his corpse left there to rot and decompose on the rope for days and days, disfigured by vultures picking at his flesh. A clear and unambiguous signal, Ama's death signified what Patrick Wolfe called "the alchemy of assimilation" in which "the social death of the Native becomes the birth of the settler."²⁷

While the communist ladino Martí received a military hearing and was soon assassinated thereafter, Ama's route towards death was significantly less circuitous. This strategy, by the local military officials that hunted and hanged Ama, signaled the neutralization of the revolt. Ama was identified and exposed as the rebel leader fanning the flames of Indigenous discontent, his ensuing brutal hanging a termination of the threat, stressing the failure and powerlessness of the Indigenous uprising. Ama's elimination symbolized the end of the insurrection and the damned future of Indigenous peoples, a victory of the Salvadoran state and settler colonialism. As a result of the martyrdom of Farabundo Martí, Ama has been largely obscured in Salvadoran history, but within Indigenous communities his narrative is kept. After roughly eighty years, Ama is still remembered as a hero in his community, a valiant

leader who attempted to fight back against the racism, murder, and the insufferable poverty created by the polarization of land and wealth by ladinos and the economic elite in 1930s El Salvador.

COLONIAL TERROR AND THE SALVADORAN RACE LAWS

Politicized Afro-Salvadoran groups participated in La Matanza along with Indigenous and *campesino* people. Just a year after, the administration of Hernández Martínez targeted racialized communities with the 1933 Migration Law. The law prohibited the migration of peoples from China and Mongolia, any members of the black race, Malaysians, and gypsies locally known as “Hungarians,” as well as new migrants from Arabia, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and Turkey.²⁸ People with African features such as curly hair, pronounced lips, and dark skin were discriminated against, and, depending on their proximity to nearby borders, expelled from the national territory altogether. These race laws fueled the notion that Africans are from elsewhere, to the point that Salvadorans today assume that the black persons they encounter in the country are most likely to be tourists.

Despite lack of acknowledgment by the Salvadoran state, however, the genetic makeup and phenotypes of El Salvador’s present population—like all of Latin America—show Afro-descendance. This historical negation of blackness or Afro-descended elements in Salvadoran culture was part of a concerted effort by *criollo* leadership to have the nation-state conform to larger trends and expectations of civilization, modernity, progress, and racial hierarchy.²⁹ From the moment of independence from Spain in the 1820s, liberal Central America sought to establish the “indohispanic” or “mestizo” as integral to the project of nation-building. In essence, this process of colonial *mestizaje* allowed indigeneity a tenable place in post-independence nationalisms, which was recuperated through mestizo ideologies celebrating the achievements of pre-Columbian civilizations such as the Maya in Guatemala and the Aztecs of Mexico. Insofar as it provides territorial legitimacy to the project of settler colonialism, indigeneity is an acceptable, if later minimized, component of the heritage of the nation-state. Blackness and negritude have fared otherwise, however, fundamentally considered external, outside, and foreign.³⁰ While the presence of Indigenous peoples could not be ignored and thus was absorbed, the lower numbers of Afro-descended peoples reinforced blackness as an ethnic identity that existed “outside” of Salvadoran territory; thus, due to its statistical insignificance and peripheral presence, blackness operated as a racial and identitarian exteriority that was never made palatable or comprehensible to the project of Salvadoran nation-building.³¹

In the popular imagination of contemporary Salvadorans, there are no Afro-descendants in the country. Popular belief often repeats the trope that the “African race” populates only those nearby countries on the isthmus that have ready access to the Atlantic Ocean and have a history of African enslavement, such as Nicaragua, Honduras, Belize, Guatemala, Costa Rica, and Panama.³² In fact, sources reveal that conquistador Pedro de Alvarado’s initial caravan through Central America included a considerable number of African slaves who served Alvarado as auxiliaries and workers

in his settlement campaigns on behalf of the Spanish Empire.³³ Pedro de Alvarado is said to have been very pleased to be allowed permission to both trade and use African slaves in his conquest missions.³⁴ Alvarado would go on to lead the conquest of the Salvadoran territory and secured it for the Spanish Crown between 1527 and 1528. In the Spanish empire's further settlement efforts in colonial Central America, many settler families would arrive with their own groups of enslaved black Africans to work as servants and farmhands. African free labor was used in gold and silver mining, while Indigenous labor, deemed unfit for the hardest work by colonial administrators and settlers, was used in the agricultural sectors of the colony instead. The Indian Julio Leiva Masin relates that Afro-descendants frequented the open-air marketplaces of Los Izalcos, the geographic location of La Matanza, selling sweets, cheese, and meats on behalf of their owners; the thin historical record suggests that these enslaved Africans working as vendors in Izalco lived on plots given to them within the large haciendas of their owners.³⁵

The historical role of Afro-descendant communities at this pivotal point in Salvadoran history underscores the experience of race and class as central to the daily life of these communities. Further, a small national archive presents challenges to research on racial formation: the obfuscating power of *mestizaje* makes it difficult to identify persons as part of a particular racial group. These challenges make it indispensable to valorize the history of Afro-Salvadorans and their particular ethnopolitics together with indigeneity as a unique and discrete element of the formation of the Salvadoran nation-state. For example, Afro-descended populations likely participated in the 1932 uprising by facilitating the organizing of the countryside for the emergent Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS).³⁶ Marxism in the 1930s allowed for the emergence of a shared vocabulary to express exploitation and political marginalization. Together with Ama and other Indigenous people, Afro-descendants experienced the same precarities that followed the abolition of communal lands, privatization, and the concentration of territorial power in the hands of a wealthy few.³⁷ Since breaking from the colonial pact in 1821, the Salvadoran state has largely operated as a vehicle for white *criollo* power and the spreading of colonial terror on the Native populations within its national orbit, essentially denying the social reality of their existence.

Pointing us towards the racial epistemologies that underpin the exercise of settler-colonial power, the anthropologist Barry Morris reminds us that "Colonial violence, implicitly or explicitly, is mostly given meaning as a series of undifferentiated racist acts."³⁸ In this vein, the scholarship on 1932 is largely focused on characterizing the Martínez regime and its racist cruelty by centering on the strongman himself. Colonial terror, as a dimension of the settler-colonial process, remains underanalyzed in this period, yet it has sustained conquest, dispossession, and the schemes of accumulation of not just Martínez, but also of the massive system he served. Perhaps the most important and unique contribution in this regard is the work of Patricia Alvarenga Venutolo, who effectively traces state terrorism as an everyday political practice in El Salvador through a historical analysis of its moral codes and ethics of power that emerged after the liberal revolution of 1885, which she argues, led directly to the events of 1932.³⁹ Aside from the work of Alvarenga Venutolo, however, racialization

as a constitutive form of colonial terror that shaped Indigenous and Afro-descendant identity and politics in the country has yet to be properly acknowledged.

For the purposes of this article, I define “colonial terror” as an affective mode of state practice that perpetually enacts violence on marginal populations for the goals of social control and centralizing economic power. The concept of colonial terror not only assumes that the nation-state is a repressive and bureaucratic machine, however, but one that, paradoxically, can also function as a vehicle for emotion, identification, and the keeping of memory.⁴⁰ While colonial terror is a state function used to justify and legitimate the massacres of racialized bodies in its relentless path towards “civilization,” my preoccupation here is the lingering fear and anxiety that persists beyond the events of punctual violence. To understand the order and temporality of colonial terror is to interrogate the function of memory, of those deep relations that color the experiences of the Indigenous and Afro-descendant day to day. Violent events have a direct effect on the social and psychic life of aggrieved communities: they affect the processes of memorialization, change the stories people tell themselves about their own history, generate resentment toward those culpable for the events, and shape the political imagination of future generations.⁴¹ The violent event can be said to prompt a radical discontinuity, signaling simultaneously a rupture and a declaration of war.⁴² Massacres like 1932 renew the antagonisms that comprise naturalized social conflict within a national territory, and as abovementioned, reverberate powerfully in the psychic lives of its descendants.⁴³

Colonial terror, then, in its pointed violence against perceived social and cultural inferiors through the state’s legislative and military mechanisms, is directly linked to the life-making possibilities of Indigenous and Afro-descended groups. In this sense, colonial terror echoes and reinforces the antagonism between historically racialized labor and repeated attempts at further exploitation of what are severely weakened, humiliated, and depleted racialized communities. Indeed, Indigenous people were presented with the options of elimination or deracination. Many abandoned traditional modes of dress, adopted public mestizo customs, and ended use of their Nahuatl-derived Pipil language in public spaces. Afro-descendants were expelled and those that remained coexisted, if through intermarriage, within Salvadoran borders. While this enacts its own form of direct violence through its deracination of outward modes of being Native or Afro, it expresses the biopolitics of settler governance through the reinscription of long-standing colonial dynamics in the present.

SETTLER COLONIALISM IN CENTRAL AMERICA

Based on information gathered through a series of interviews he conducted with ladinos who witnessed the 1932 uprising, the historian Segundo Montes writes that it appeared as if the military had been preparing for an Indigenous rebellion for years before the actual event took place.⁴⁴ The military coup that ousted Arturo Araujo and delivered the presidency to Maximiliano Hernández Martínez, then acting vice president and minister of war, had been for some time lobbying the legislative assembly to increase military outposts in the western part of the country years before he took

charge of the Republic. This suspicious behavior suggests an element of premeditation and foresight to the pressure cooker of interethnic violence boiling in Los Izalcos.

As mentioned, the 1930s is the period of the military's professionalization, the broader militarization of Salvadoran society, and the rise of a racialized criminology and legal system that determined who was worthy of rights, citizenship, and legal protection. Racialized criminology was forged in 1932 as a way of identifying, assessing, and policing certain kinds of communities; its biopolitical coordinates were cemented through the practice of Indigenous murder. Discourses about hygiene, "moral corruption," and "barbaric customs" ascribed to racialized communities were coupled with the common-sense militarism prompted by Hernández's state. Emergent legal frameworks such as the Salvadoran Race Laws emerged to simultaneously produce and enforce racial identities, providing a rapid feedback loop of justification for transgressive and rebellious activity. In short, political devices were generated in this period that further legitimized the disciplining and social control of racialized populations who were marked as deviant due to their particular cast of features, social habits and scientifically supported proclivities to vagrancy and disregards for productivity.

The scale of the violence of 1932's La Matanza has had powerful reverberations throughout Central America. The events of the 1930s cannot be recounted without thinking about the political events in neighboring Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua, which depend on regional shifts as much as they do on global aftershocks such as those due to US economic instabilities or its adoption of the Good Neighbor policy towards Latin America. Indeed, events in these small nations can only be truly appreciated by considering their transnational dimension and their direct and indirect links to other struggles. To get a wider sense of the intimacies and mechanics of settler-colonial social control, the emergence of an armed Indigenous struggle in Guatemala or the political moves by Native communities in Nicaragua and Honduras must be thought in relation to events like 1932. In fact, some of these cross-border solidarities were already present in the time of Ama and Martí and continued developing through the mid-1940s as Hernández Martínez's regime came to a close.

In locating the story of Afro-descendants in El Salvador within the narrative of 1932, I do not mean to suggest the de-indigenization of the rural mobilization or to negate in any sense the peculiar history of Indigenous groups targeted by the ethnocidal character of the massacre. Rather, I am suggesting that the narrative of historical Afro-descendency is a parallel experience that must be taken into consideration to ascertain the true character of settler colonialism as an ongoing, though historically fundamental, structure.⁴⁵ The two narratives that coincide in the events of 1932—the elimination of the indigene and the expulsion of the black—are critical in producing difference and securing both discursive and territorial space, which is, in the end, the true object of the settler-colonial project.⁴⁶ Further, thinking comparatively with settler colonialism as a framework can help us to understand how descendants of slaves can negotiate "those aspects or fragments of the past necessary for life to go on in the present" in specifically Hispanophone contexts.⁴⁷ Disqualified from having any history or claims to heritage within the national territory, this interethnic portrait of 1932 demonstrates the complex nature of the origin of the uprising and its effects on

racialized populations. Afro-descendants were simply erased from having any role in the uprising. The Indigenous, who were paradoxically venerated as being at the heart of the national project, were assimilated and dissolved into the general population, but, at best, relegated to purveyors of culture or political and social actors of a distant past. The limited numbers of imported enslaved Africans into the region was markedly different from the economy of chattel slavery in the slaveholding American South, however, and Africans were only sparingly employed as a way to dislodge Indigenous peoples from their productive communal lands.

Racialization, under Martínez and after, was a critical component of everyday experience and marked certain bodies as socially marginal, disqualified from civic participation, and peripheral to the project of nation-state formation. What Charles Hale has called “nineteenth-century racism” was diffused throughout the Central American region, colored its nation-building projects, and was integrated into both their social Darwinist views of multiracial progress with white leadership, on the one hand, and the potential degeneration of civilization on the other. As in many nations around the world, the 1930s Salvadoran elite and intellectual classes were convinced by the arguments made by Euro-American eugenicists and race scientists who argued for a society based on racial hierarchy rooted in white supremacy. *La Enfermedad de Centroamérica* (1934), for example, was written by a Nicaraguan lawyer, unionist, and statesman, Salvadora Mendieta, who argues for a Central American society unified under the white race with all others subordinated and receptive to its moral and intellectual primacy; “ethnic” traditions should learn to operate within the Caucasian mold.⁴⁸ If “race is colonialism speaking,”⁴⁹ then the twin processes of deracination and elimination as encoded in law and military repression can be thought as part of the process to statistically exterminate Indigenous and Afro-descended populations. Allowing the project of *mestizaje* to appear more legitimate, the reduction of these communities was critical in developing a settler “common sense” of Indigenous disappearance and African expulsion that contributed, immensely, to the coherence of the unfolding nation-state project.

The naked violence experienced by Indigenous peoples and Afro-descended populations at different points in the long colonial history of the country is, in many ways, unexceptional. It follows the general pattern of settler colonialism around the globe in its marshaling of settler bodies for the displacement and elimination of Indigenous peoples and the subsequent appropriation of territory, first physically, then spiritually. The production of race in early twentieth-century El Salvador was central to consolidating the ambitions of a nation-state project that attempted to inculcate nationalism, establish tradition, and forge itself as an equal participant in global capitalism. As Patrick Wolfe writes, racialization “preserves the trace of colonial histories—which is to say, colonized populations are racialized in specific ways that mark and reproduce the unequal relationships into which Europeans initially co-opted these populations . . . racialization represents a response to the crisis occasioned when colonizers are threatened with the requirement to share social space with the colonized.”⁵⁰

In sum, this article proposes that colonial terror is both a function and byproduct of settler colonialism and that, as a concept, colonial terror can be useful in identifying the various ways in which those subjected to ethnic violence in the past may curate the

present. As the lynching of Ama powerfully recalls, the practice of killing Indigenous people was used as a way to demobilize racialized populations and justify existing regimes of social organization and power imbalance. There is a history and pattern to the pressure cooker of inequality; it was no less than one hundred years after the 1832 Aquino uprising that the murder of Ama renewed the state's commitment to an anti-Indigenous settler world and centered infliction of violence on Indigenous leadership as the constitutive threat to the nation-state. Colonial terror is, in this sense, an attempt to reaffirm the links to racial confrontations and to the prevailing climate of historical repetition that continually renders Indigenous and Afro-descended peoples as targets of violence. Although colonial terror persists, and continues troubling the memory of the present by the interpellation of Indigenous and Afro-descended subjects—that is, their ideological and experiential structuring with fear and anxiety—this history also throws into relief their spirit and strength. Thinking about the 1930s in El Salvador through the framework of settler colonialism allows us to understand the complex elements at play and more concretely assess both the short-term ambitions and the long-term effects of elimination and deracination. They will, after all, characterize all subsequent history in this small piece of the Central American isthmus.

NOTES

1. The term *campesinos* is widely used in Latin America to denote the countryside peasantry. It operates simultaneously as a class-based distinction and an agricultural identity.

2. Ruy Mauro Marino, “the *foundation* of dependency is the superexploitation of labour,” quoted in Enrique Dussel, *Towards an Unknown Marx: A Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861–63* (London: Routledge, 2001), 205; also see Adrián Sotelo Valencia, “Latin America: Dependency and Super-Exploitation,” *Critical Sociology* 40, no. 4 (July 2014): 539–49, <https://doi.org/10.1177/02720896920513479616>.

3. Jeffrey Gould, “Indigenista Dictators and the Problematic Origins of Democracy in Central America,” in *The Great Depression in Latin America*, ed. Alan Knight and Paulo Drinot (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). This entire volume recounts the political changes that took place due to the forced restructuring of Latin American nation-states to the emergency needs of global capitalism. See also Cameron G. Thies, “War, Rivalry, and State Building in Latin America,” *American Journal of Political Science* 49, no. 3 (July 2005): 451–65, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-5907.2005.00134.x>.

4. Erik Ching and Virginia Tilley, “Indians, the Military and the Rebellion of 1932 in El Salvador,” *Journal of Latin American Studies* 30, no. 1 (1998): 121–56, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X97004926>. The documentary film directed by Jeffrey Gould and Carlos Henriquez Consalvi, *1932: Cicatriz de la Memoria* (2002), also recounts this narrative through oral history with living survivors and reveals its profound traumatic effects. See Jeffrey L. Gould and Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, *To Rise in Darkness: Revolution, Repression, and Memory in El Salvador, 1920–1930* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008). The term *corvo* (sometimes spelled *corbo*) is a Salvadoran neologism that refers to a hooked cutting instrument such as a scythe or machete.

5. The term *ladino* describes Spanish-descended, non-Indigenous peoples who are generally in discursive and racial relation to Indigenous populations and Afro-descendants. See, for example, Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

6. Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations* (New York: Schocken Books Inc., 1969), 262–63.
7. Andreas Huyssen, *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2003).
8. Jeffrey L. Gould and Aldo Lauria-Santiago, "'They Call Us Thieves and Steal Our Wage': Toward a Reinterpretation of the Salvadoran Rural Mobilization, 1929–1931," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 83, no. 2 (2004): 191–237, <https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-84-2-191>. See also Thomas P. Anderson, *Matanza: the 1932 'Slaughter' that Traumatized a Nation, Shaping US–Salvadoran Policy to this Day* (Willimantic, CT: Curbstone Press, 1992 [1971]).
9. Virginia Tilley, "Assimilated or Erased: Ethnocide by Statistics," *Seeing Indians: A Study of Race, Nation, and Power in El Salvador* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005), 171.
10. Ching and Tilley, "Indians, the Military and the Rebellion of 1932 in El Salvador"; Tilley, *Seeing Indians*. The term *ethnocide* is used to signal the forceful destruction of a culture through violent means rather than simply the physical elimination of a population.
11. Erik Ching, *Authoritarian El Salvador: Politics and the Origins of the Military Regimes, 1880–1940* (University of Notre Dame Press, 2014).
12. Kenneth J. Grieb, "The United States and the Rise of General Maximiliano Hernández Martínez," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 3, no. 2 (1971): 151–72, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00001425>.
13. Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* 15, no. 1 (2003): 25, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-15-1-11>.
14. Héctor Pérez Brignoli, "The Economies of Central America, 1860–1940," in *An Economic History of Twentieth-Century Latin America, Volume I: The Export Age*, ed. Enrique Cárdenas, José Antonio Ocampo, and Rosemary Thorp (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000).
15. Aldo Lauria-Santiago, "'That a Poor Man Be Industrious': Coffee, Community, and Agrarian Capitalism in the Transformation of El Salvador's Ladino Peasantry, 1850–1900," in *Identity and Struggle at the Margins of the Nation-State: The Laboring Peoples of Central America and the Hispanic Caribbean*, ed. Aviva Chomsky and Aldo Lauria-Santiago (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 25–51.
16. Erik Ching, "In Search of the Party: The Communist Party, the Comintern, and the Peasant Rebellion of 1932 in El Salvador," *The Americas* 55, no. 2 (1998): 204–39, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1008053>. See also Erik Ching and Jussi Pakkasvirta, "Latin American Materials in the Comintern Archive," *Latin American Research Review* 35, no. 1 (2000), 138–49, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2692060>.
17. See Erik Ching, "Patronage and Politics under Martínez, 1931–39: The Local Roots of Military Authoritarianism in El Salvador," in *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society, and Community in El Salvador*, ed. Aldo Lauria and Leigh Binford (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 50–70.
18. Carlos Benjamín Lara Martínez, "Tradicionalismo y Modernidad: El Sistema de Confradías en Santo Domingo de Guzmán," *ANALES del Museo de América* 10 (2002): 155–75, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/servlet/articulo?codigo=1433266>.
19. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Vintage Books, 1999).
20. Carlos Gregorio López Bernal, "El Levantamiento de los Indios Nonualcos en 1832: Hacia una Nueva Interpretación," *Hacer Historia en El Salvador* 1, no. 1 (May 2008): 23–28. Also see Aldo Lauria-Santiago, "Land, Community, and Revolt in Late Nineteenth-Century Indian Izalco," *Landscapes of Struggle: Politics, Society, and Community in El Salvador*, ed. Aldo Lauria-Santiago and Leigh Binford (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004), 17–38.
21. Manual Vidal, *Nociones de Historia en Centroamérica* (San Salvador: Editorial Universitaria, 1961), 175.

22. Most Central American nations have idealized Indigenous icons that have been used to consolidate national identity. Examples include the Lenca ruler Lempira from what is present-day Honduras; the Maya king Tecún-Umán of Guatemala; chief Nicarao of Nicaragua; and the Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc. For El Salvador, this figure is the Pipil cacique Atlacatl. See Francis Gall, "Conquista de El Salvador y Fundación del Primigenio San Salvador, 1524," *Antropología e Historia de Guatemala* 18, no. 1 (1966): 27–29.
23. Javier Sanjinés C., *Mestizaje Upside-Down: Aesthetic Politics in Modern Bolivia* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 2004).
24. Since the moment of independence from Spain, nation-building in Latin America—the culture, politics, and narrative of modernity that forged the nation—has taken shape through a fusion of liberal principles that are coupled with pre-Columbian grandeur. See, for example, *Nineteenth-Century Nation Building and the Latin American Intellectual Tradition*, ed. Janet Burke and Ted Humphrey (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2007).
25. See Ching, *Authoritarian El Salvador*, 197.
26. Julio Leiva Masin, *Los Izalcos: Testimonio de un Indígena* (San Salvador: Editorial Universitaria, 2011), 28.
27. Patrick Wolfe, "Race and the Trace of History: For Henry Reynolds," *Studies in Settler Colonialism*, ed. Fiona Batmen and Lionel Pilkington (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 273.
28. *Diario Oficial* (1933), Ley de Migración, Decreto Legislativo No. 86, *Diario Oficial* no. 138, Tomo 114, del miércoles 21 de junio de 1933. Record is from the Archivo General de la Nación in San Salvador, El Salvador. It is briefly discussed in Tobias Schwarz, "Políticas de Inmigración en América Latina: El Extranjero Indeseable en las Normas Nacionales, de la Independencia hasta los años de 1930," *PROCESOS: Reviste Ecuatoriana de Historia* 2, (2012): 59.
29. Severo Martínez Peláez, *La Patria del Criollo: An Interpretation of Colonial Guatemala* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).
30. Largely due to low population numbers of Afro-groups and their nonintegration into *mestizaje*, the experience of Afro-descended communities in El Salvador differs from other regional account of Guyanese workers, who forged a new Native social group via belonging through the act of labor; this was due, fundamentally, to higher numbers. For more, see Shona Jackson, *Creole Indigeneity: Between Myth and Nation in the Caribbean* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
31. Demographic and ethnosocial shifts are chronicled by historian Juan Carlos Solórzano Fonseca in "Los Años Finales de la Dominación Española (1750–1821)," in *Demografía e Imperio: Guía para la Historia de la América Central Española*, ed. George W. Lowell and Christopher H. Luz (Toulouse: Asociación para el Fomento de los Estudios Históricos en Centroamérica, 2013 [2000]), in which he notes the persistence of regimes of racialized labor in indigo production in El Salvador. While dominated by Indigenous workers, these regimes included black and mulatto laborers as well. For a discussion of blackness as an exteriority to El Salvador and its presence in contemporary Honduras through a settler-colonial analytic, see Christopher A. Loperena, "Settler Violence? Race and Emergent Frontiers of Progress in Honduras," *American Quarterly* 69, no. 4 (December 2017): 801–07, <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2017.0066>.
32. Costa Rica, like some of the other nations listed here, developed well-known state narratives of racial whitening that neglected their multiracial pasts. In many, as in Costa Rica, political history has generated the idea of being the "the Switzerland of Central America" with a cultural heritage built on their isolation from the broader economic and cultural fluxes in the isthmus. For the origin of this myth in Costa Rica, see Lowell Gudmundson, *Costa Rica before Coffee: Society and Economy on the Eve of the Export Boom* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986).
33. Christopher Lutz, *Historia Sociodemográfica de Guatemala 1541–1773* (Antigua Guatemala: Centro de Investigaciones Regionales de Mesoamérica, 1984).

34. Ibid.
35. Pedro Escalante Arce, "La Herencia Africana en la Identidad Histórica Salvadoreña," *Actas del V Congreso Iberoamericano de Academias de la Historia: Los Estudios como Expresión de la Cultura Nacional* (Santiago: Academia Chilena de la Historia, 1996), 109–34.
36. Wolfgang Effenberger López identifies this history in his critical reading of the oft-forgotten Salvadoran novel *Cafetos en Flor* (1947) by Miguel Ángel Ibarra; see Wolfgang Effenberger López, "La Participación de Afrodescendientes de Atiquizaya en el Levantamiento de 1932," *Científica* 1, no. 2, 139–54, <http://hdl.handle.net/10972/2211>.
37. Héctor Lindo-Fuentes, Erik Ching, and Rafael A. Lara-Martinez, *Remembering a Massacre in El Salvador: The Insurrection of 1932, Roque Dalton, and the Politics of Historical Memory* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2007).
38. Barry Morris, "Frontier Colonialism as a Culture of Terror," *Journal of Australian Studies* 15, no. 35: 72–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14443059209387119>.
39. Patricia Alvarenga, *Cultura y Ética de la Violencia: El Salvador 1880–1932* (San Salvador: CONCULTURA, 2006).
40. This function of the state as keeper of memory is conceptually related to the narrative of historical contestation around the trial of Chief Leschi in Lisa Blee, *Framing Chief Leschi* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014). Like Ama, Chief Leschi was spectacularly and hurriedly hanged, thwarting efforts of Native self-determination as it directly confronted ascendant settler power.
41. I am reminded here of Karl Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852): "Men make their own history, but not under their own choosing, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living." Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1978), 595.
42. In discussing the death ethics of war of the naturalized social conflicts that characterize the project of colonialism, Nelson Maldonado-Torres writes that "Ordinary life is infected by the colonial virus." See Nelson Maldonado-Torres, *Against War: Views from the Underside of Modernity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 142.
43. See Ned Blackhawk, "The Indigenous Body in Pain," in *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008).
44. Segundo Montes, *El Compadrazgo, una Estructura de Poder en El Salvador* (San Salvador: UCA Editores, 1979), 180.
45. Evelyn Nakano Glenn, "Settler Colonialism as Structure: A Framework for Comparative Studies of U.S. Race and Gender Formation," *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity* 1, no. 1 (2015): 54–74, <https://doi.org/10.1177/23326492145600440>. See also Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623520601056240>.
46. This argument builds on Lorenzo Veracini's discussion of "population" and the "exogenous Others" that are produced by the settler-colonial polity in securing territorial and political coherence; see Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 26–29.
47. Achille Mbembe, "On the Power of the False," *Public Culture* 14, no. 3: 636–37, <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-14-3-629>.
48. Salvador Mendieta, *La Enfermedad de Centroamérica* (Barcelona: Tipografía Maucci, 1934), 24.
49. Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London: Verso, 2016), 5.
50. Patrick Wolfe, "Race and the Trace of History: For Henry Reynolds," *Studies in Settler Colonialism*, ed. Fiona Barmen and Lionel Pikington (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 273.