

# SEM {STUDENTNEWS}

An official publication  
of the **Society for  
Ethnomusicology**

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## DECOLONIZING ETHNOMUSICOLOGY

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## Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Volume 12, Number 2, of *SEM Student News*! This is my first issue as editor and thus an important one for me, but it is also a significant one for our newsletter, society, and field as a whole. Decolonizing ethnomusicology, as the following voices advocate, is as pressing a concern and project as it has ever been—(post)colonialism and its legacies pervade our daily lives, from the classroom to the field, wherever that may be.

Our initial call invited critical discussion of ethnomusicology as a field and practice, asking contributors to draw attention to the significance of diversity in perspectives and representation. Furthermore, it encouraged reflexive critique of our positions, roles, actions, responsibilities, and relationships within the communities where we are engaged as graduate students and ethnomusicologists.

Thus, I hope that you, our colleagues and readers, will open yourselves to the various critiques and perspectives presented here, consider them with and against your own work and experiences, and reflect on what it means to bring decolonizing knowledges and praxes into the spaces we negotiate on a daily basis.

In addition to contributions submitted in response to our call for submissions, this issue of *SEM Student News* features two cross-publications from a special issue of *Ethnomusicology Review/Sounding Board* dedicated to the Pulse nightclub shooting in Orlando, Florida. Their issue features a range of reflections on the tragedy and its implications for our work as ethnomusicologists. Likewise, *Ethnomusicology Review/Sounding Board* includes three *SEM Student News* editorials on decolonizing ethnomusicology. We

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# Letter from the Editor

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are proud to collaborate with *Ethnomusicology Review* in this regard, particularly when concerning these salient subjects.

And, finally, with a transition of editorship come a few changes to *SEM Student News*. Most apparent is the introduction of individual issue numbers to organize our publications on a biannual basis. In addition, and branching off from this primary publication, we are happy to introduce *SEM Student News Reports*, a brief publication periodically released in between and as a precursor to our full issues. *Reports* will provide updates on SEM calls, activities, and events of interest to students; initiate our own calls for submission/application; and help us stay

better connected with our reading audience and the SEM student population. By providing spaces for us to engage with and give voice to students, I hope we can continue the remarkable work that our previous editors, Lauren Sweetman and Justin R. Hunter, accomplished over the last several years.

So please enjoy reading and engaging with this new issue of *SEM Student News*. I encourage you to respond via the listserv, Facebook, Twitter, and email with any comments, reflections, ideas, and questions you may have regarding this and future publications.

**Davin Rosenberg**  
(University of California, Davis)

## SEM Reports

announcements, conference calls, new initiatives

By Davin Rosenberg (University of California, Davis)

This column draws attention to exciting ways you can get involved in SEM, and related projects and sites of activity. From conferences to publications, this column provides updates and information on becoming more active and engaged as an ethnomusicologist. If you have announcements, calls, or new programs that should be included in an upcoming issue, contact us at [semstudentnews@gmail.com](mailto:semstudentnews@gmail.com).

### Sound Matters

*Sound Matters* ([soundmattersthesemblog.wordpress.com](http://soundmattersthesemblog.wordpress.com)) is a forum offering content on a variety of subjects related to music, sound, and ethnomusicology. *Sound Matters* seeks lively and accessible posts that provide stimulating reading for both specialists and general readers, and encourages authors to consider this an opportunity to transcend the boundaries of traditional print with brief writings that may integrate hyperlinks and multimedia examples.

Posts may follow any recognized editorial standards. Specific guidelines for posts are as follows:

- Posts may be up to 1000 words, in English.
- Post titles should indicate content as succinctly as possible.
- Submissions previously published only on the author's personal blog will be considered.
- Visual illustrations, including musical examples, must be jpg files; sound illustrations must be mp3 files.
- Video illustrations must be mp4 files or videos hosted online with embedding codes (e.g., those on YouTube).
- Suggestions for tags are welcome; these should be general categories, not personal names or other more specific information. Tags serve two purposes: linking posts on related topics and adding keywords not already in the text.

Manuscripts should be submitted to the Editor, James R. Cowdery, at [jcowdery@rilm.org](mailto:jcowdery@rilm.org) as email attachments in Microsoft Word; please include an abstract in the email text.

For more information and editorial guidelines, see the [SEM website](#).

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# SEM Reports

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## *Ethnomusicology Translations*

This is SEM's peer-reviewed, open-access online series for the publication of ethnomusicological literature translated into English. Articles and other literature in any language other than English will be considered for editorial review, translation, and publication. Preference will be given to individual articles published in scholarly journals or books during the past 20 years. As a central online resource, *Ethnomusicology Translations* aims to increase access to the global scope of recent music scholarship and advance ethnomusicology as an international field of research and communication.

*Ethnomusicology Translations* is now into its fourth issue and can be accessed at <https://scholarworks.iu.edu/journals/index.php/emt>. The latest publication features Varga Sándor's 2014 article, "[A táncházas turizmus hatása egy erdélyi falu társadalmi kapcsolataira és hagyományaihoz való viszonyára](#)" [[The Influence of Dance-House Tourism on the Social Relationships and Traditions of a Village in Transylvania](#)], translated by Valér Bedő, with Colin Quigley. Sándor examines the impact of fieldwork on the life of the rural villages in Transylvania that have been the site of significant ethnochoreological and revival-movement research since the 1960s; and challenges well-established norms in methodology, calling for a more reflexive awareness on the part of fieldworkers.

The editors of *Ethnomusicology Translations* are currently seeking nominations of ethnomusicological articles representing a wide range of languages and geographic areas. Ethnomusicologists are encouraged to nominate articles by sending an email to Richard Wolf, General Editor, at [rwolf@fas.harvard.edu](mailto:rwolf@fas.harvard.edu). See [SEM's website](#) for more details about nominations and the review process.

## *Ethnomusicology Today*

This is SEM's podcast series that represents a growing diversity of publications embracing digital media formats in an effort to increase accessibility and public engagement both within and beyond the field of ethnomusicology. Currently available episodes feature short interviews with ethnomusicologists recently published in the journal, *Ethnomusicology*.

Recently, episode 3 featured a discussion with Gregory Booth (University of Auckland) regarding his article "Copyright Law and the Changing Economic Value of Popular Music in India" that can be found in the Spring/Summer 2015 issue of *Ethnomusicology*. In episode 4, Anna Morcom (Royal Holloway, University of London) discusses her article "Terrains of Bollywood: (Neoliberal) Capitalism and the Transformation of Cultural Economies" that can also be found in the Spring/Summer 2015 issue of *Ethnomusicology*. Forthcoming episodes will continue to feature interviews and stories aimed at engaging a broad audience interested in contemporary issues in global music studies.

Listen to the podcast via streaming on the SEM website: [http://www.ethnomusicology.org/members/group\\_content\\_view.asp?group=156353&id=534562](http://www.ethnomusicology.org/members/group_content_view.asp?group=156353&id=534562).

Subscribe to Ethnomusicology Today via iTunes: <https://itunes.apple.com/us/podcast/ethnomusicology-today/id1042087712?mt=2>.

To submit feedback or suggestions for future episodes, please contact Trevor Harvey at [trevor-harvey@uiowa.edu](mailto:trevor-harvey@uiowa.edu).

Keep an eye out for **SEM Student News Reports** to stay informed on SEM calls, activities, and events of interest to students. *SN Reports* is periodically released via our social media pages, separate from our Fall/Winter and Spring/Summer issues.

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# SEM Reports

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## Convocatoria de Artículos en Español: Hacia una Educación Musical Decolonial

### Call for Papers in Spanish: Towards a Decolonizing Music Education

Revista Internacional de Educación Musical (RIEM)/Sociedad Internacional de la Educación Musical (ISME)

La *colonialidad* es la matriz de poder que pervive en el mundo poscolonial sobre la base de la imposición de modos de conocer, ser y estar en el universo que, surgidos del pensamiento y la retórica de la etnia occidental desvaloriza otras lenguas, culturas, religiones, economías, formas de organización social, subjetividades, etc.

Este número se propone reunir contribuciones que permitan poner en valor la multiplicidad de *Educaciones Musicales*, sus bases teóricas (musicológicas, psicológicas, educacionales, filosóficas, etc.), y sus realizaciones en atención a los contextos en los que tienen lugar. Se espera recibir trabajos que aborden, entre otros temas:

- Identificación y análisis de contextos de construcción de conocimiento musical comunitario.
- Modos de circulación de saberes musicales vinculados a expresiones musicales que tienen lugar en encuentros intersubjetivos en el contexto de celebraciones populares, prácticas de enseñanza-aprendizaje, expresiones colectivas espontáneas, y ámbitos de contención y desarrollo social.
- Formación de educadores musicales sobre la base de concepciones didácticas pluriversales, con particular atención al análisis de los problemas propios de la cultura de pertenencia.
- Análisis, crítica y debate sobre las epistemologías hegemónicas en el campo de la educación musical y las tensiones generadas con otras epistemologías.
- Debates sobre la persistencia de la colonialidad en la regulación de los escenarios y las prácticas de educación musical.
- Experiencias de educación musical que recuperen las ontologías de música y músico que contemplen la participación por sobre la contemplación, el colectivo social como músico, la indivisibilidad del cuerpo y la mente musical, y las funciones hedónica y celebratoria de la musicalidad humana.
- Desarrollo de herramientas conceptuales, categorías de pensamiento, estrategias educacionales y políticas para la construcción de saberes musicales vernáculos.
- Procesos psicológicos particulares identificados en la construcción social de conocimiento musical en múltiples escenarios de participación.

#### Fechas Importantes:

- Fecha límite para el envío de propuestas: 15 de marzo, 2017.
- Notificación de aceptación: 1 de mayo, 2017.
- Envío del artículo revisado: 1 de junio, 2017.

Más información acerca de esta convocatoria de RIEM: <http://www.revistaeducacionmusical.org/index.php/reml/announcement/view/9>.

We are currently discussing plans for future issues of *SEM Student News*, including Volume 13, Number 1. If there are any topics that you want us to address in future issues, please email the editor at [semstudentnews@gmail.com](mailto:semstudentnews@gmail.com).



# Student Voices

a student union column

By Ana-María Alarcón-Jiménez (Instituto de Etnomusicología-Música e Dança (INET); Universidade Nova de Lisboa, Portugal)

"Student Voices" aims to provide a space for ethnomusicology students to voice their thoughts and concerns in relation to *SEM Student News*' general topic. The makers of this space, Jessica Getman, Justin R. Hunter, and José Torres (former members of the SEM Student Union's Executive Committee), have worked hard to push this initiative forward. As the author of this column, my role is to find effective ways to open this space to ethnomusicology students' diverse voices. This column also aims to link *Student News* with the Student Union (SU). Together, we are striving to collectively construct the SU as an open, available, and caring resource for students. On behalf of all the passionate and hardworking volunteers that make up the SU's five different committees, I want to invite ethnomusicology students to participate in our Student Union. We want to hear about your needs and concerns and to look for new projects that tackle issues important to you.

## Decolonizing Ethnomusicology: A Survey

Echoing the title of this column, and the particular topic of the present edition of *SEM Student News*, this space resounds with students' voices, all of whom participated in a voluntary online survey regarding decolonizing ethnomusicology. I wrote the survey questions based on *SEM Student News*' call for submissions, and participants had about a week (September 25–October 1) to respond. The survey consisted of questions regarding: the permeation of English throughout the field of ethnomusicology; thoughts on decolonization in relation to ethnomusicology; students' roles and experiences in decolonizing ethnomusicology; professional organizations' support of decolonization; and the influence of Indigenous/"non-Western" ways of knowing. I grouped the questions into five different sections, the last four borrowed directly from the call for submissions topics proposed by our editor, Davin Rosenberg. The goal was to present the thoughts of our survey participants alongside the viewpoints of the other newsletter contributors.

The survey was completed by twenty-two graduate students, one undergraduate, one postdoctoral fellow, and one faculty member. There were contributions from a variety of places, including Mexico, Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Honduras, Jamaica, Singapore, New Zealand, Turkey, Quebec, Germany, and the United Kingdom; however, the majority of participants currently study in the United States although only nine of the total 16 were born there. Below is a summary of their answers organized by section. As some participants' arguments overlapped, I attempted to select representative answers from different authors in order to highlight their dialogue and views. Likewise, to let the students speak for themselves, I have deprioritized my own narrative throughout text.

## Section 1. Participants and Language

The goal of this section was to learn about the language in which student participants read and write about ethnomusicology. Exactly half of the pool selected English as their native language. Among non-native English speakers, Spanish was the language most widely spoken, followed

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# Student Voices

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by Portuguese, French, German, Mandarin, and Turkish. To the question “In what language do you read ethnomusicological literature?” 84.6% of the total pool of participants responded “in multiple languages,” including English, while 15.4% said only in English. As such, this data is difficult to interpret because, as one participant pointed out,

(...) a lot of ethnomusicological literature published in the English speaking world is translated into other languages. For scholars who study ethnomusicology outside of the English speaking world, they may be very “well-versed” in the English literature, or even trained only with that literature translated from English because they are considered as the “standard” (or constructed as such). If we really want to decolonize ethnomusicology, I think it is important to put Ethnomusicology within a broader context of how knowledge in higher education is produced globally, especially outside of the West, and how these “local” structures are mimicking and reproducing the very same system of discrimination and inequalities to the locals, similar to that within the US (or other Western/European, in whatever name you would call it).

Contrastingly, a non-native English speaker argued,

I don't think decolonization will become a thing if suddenly English drops being the dominant language of academia. I'm happy reading and writing only in English. Increase in multiple language research would help but it's also a nice thing to have a common language around the world (which is English through colonial reasons perhaps) from a practical point of view. It is beneficial to be able to have discussions with people from around the world without learning a lot of languages. I don't think isolation through vernacular languages is really the answer.

In terms of writing ethnomusicological texts (articles, books, homework, blog entries, theses, or dissertations), 34.6% of the total number of participants said they write only in English, 15.4% only in their native language (excluding English), and the remaining 50% in two or more languages but always including English.

It is interesting to note a flaw in these questions, as they were written exclusively in English. As one participant pointed out, “This questionnaire could have been multilingual.” The survey was not translated into any other languages even though I could have done this easily, for Spanish is my native language. I point this out here as a way to highlight how some of the aspects brought in by participants throughout the survey were built in the skin of the survey itself. For instance, translating and putting translations in this text would have required a lot of extra time (and space), a reason I believe I did not even think about writing the questions in different languages. And a “lack of time” is actually one of the points brought in by participants as excuses they have encountered when proposing ways and actions to decolonize the classroom.

## Section 2. Participants' Views on Decolonizing Ethnomusicology

In this section, all participants (except one) answered positively to the question of whether or not decolonizing ethnomusicology was actually important, but only 34.6% saw this as something currently possible. Participants' views on what decolonizing ethnomusicology actually entails yield answers that can be grouped into four different themes: 1) decentering ethnomusicology from the United States and Europe; 2) expanding/transforming the discipline; 3) recognizing privilege and power; and 4) constructing spaces to actually talk about decolonizing ethnomusicology among peers and colleagues.

One participant proposed decentering ethnomusicology by “decentering the constructed canon that imagines ethnomusicology as the child of German musicology and American anthropology.” This participant also advocated paying “more attention to diverse perspectives and practices of Music and Dance in the world rather than focus[ing] on an in-depth knowledge of Western European Art Music (that is accompanied by some general sense of something ‘Other’).”

Participants also suggested ideas like “*pressupor a desigualdade de condições entre o centro e a periferia acadêmica no mundo, dando voz a epistemologias fora do eixo dominante*” (“to presuppose the inequality of conditions available

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# Student Voices

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between the academic center and the periphery in the world, giving voice to epistemologies that are outside the dominant axis”), and building bridges “between Latin American and other non-Spanish speaking” academic institutions.

The second theme (expanding/transforming the discipline) was present throughout the survey, and it was touched upon at least once by the majority of the twenty-five participants. Likewise, it echoed the first section in that it critiqued the discipline’s privilege of the written word:

A decolonized ethnomusicology would privilege the representational forms (language, transcription, etc.) most relevant to the producers of the sonic object under study. In other words, ethnomusicologists would write and talk about music and sound of a particular community in its own terms, offering translations where necessary, but focusing on how the sound-makers prefer to represent their own products. Readers and audiences would have to acclimate themselves, at least to some degree, to these native representational forms. This is just one idea, though with much more thought I could come up with others.

For another student, a decolonized ethnomusicology “would look like multi-media presentations instead of the insistence on the written word, the end of the insistence on articles published in expensive journals, more communication with non-scholars.” The classroom space was also brought into question here. A student proposed to have

more work outside of the classroom(!) to make music and dance in diverse contexts, stronger ties to music education, including ongoing outreach to local schools, events that interest diverse groups and stronger connections between local communities and universities to increase access to archives/classrooms/academic resources in general.

In relation to the third theme, students said that the “recognition of position and privilege [. . .] for Euro-American/English-speaking scholars” was an important aspect of decolonizing ethnomusicology, as well as

recognizing right of refusal, up to and beyond the point of publication. It [decolonizing ethnomusicology] also means scholars who are obligated (in the strictest possible sense) to use their privilege/knowledge/position/power to advocate on issues relevant to the communities they work with.

The transformation/expansion of ethnomusicology, a recurrent theme throughout the survey as expressed earlier, was considered part of the decolonizing process. Students proposed making “applied ethnomusicology the bare minimum for our discipline, not the awkward cousin.” They suggested starting an “expansion of what qualifies as a scholarly project, [the] deepening of connection[s] between academia and applied/(self-) advocacy/activist-oriented projects,” and the “purposeful creation of resources and opportunities for scholars with non-traditional/academic backgrounds.”

Responding to what a “decolonized ethnomusicology” might actually look and sound like, participants touched upon two main issues. First, they stated that a decolonized ethnomusicology ought to be more inclusive of people, ideas, sounds, and languages and empty of exoticisms, and second, that it must expand, once again, beyond academia. For instance, some people said that a decolonized ethnomusicology would have “more varied approaches and methodologies,” that

Students proposed making “applied ethnomusicology the bare minimum for our discipline, not the awkward cousin” . . . (and suggested) the “purposeful creation of resources and opportunities for scholars with non-traditional/academic backgrounds.”

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# Student Voices

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it would be “less focused on traditional written products,” and that it would be open to “more interaction with scholars and students from related fields especially those that bring intersectional perspectives on race, gender, class, etc.” A participant also said that “I would like to see more international scholars who are not working in the US coming to SEM and share their thoughts and research.”

In regards to constructing discursive spaces open to decolonizing ethnomusicology (theme #4), one participant wrote at the end of the questionnaire:

I know that I have colleagues and fellow students who will not fill out this survey at all because they are so convinced that the field cannot change to accommodate them, their perspective, or their work. I’ve said my piece but it’s the voices that you won’t be hearing through this survey that are the most important to hear, the voices of the students we have lost or are losing because they feel like the “ethno” to someone’s “musicology.” I don’t know exactly what to do about that, but I intend to do my best to be a part of expanding the space in this discipline through my listening, my friendship, good humor, and flexibility.

## Sections 3. Students’ Roles in Decolonizing Ethnomusicology

In the middle of the survey, questions focused on the role of students in decolonizing our discipline as learners, teachers, and researchers. Here, the walls of the classroom were, once again, cast in doubt as adequate borders to delimit the teaching/learning space, as was the theoretical and reading material used to both learn and teach ethnomusicology. In the field, students centered on listening as a vehicle to decolonize ethnomusicological practices, as well as on doing

more projects among your communities, while making space for the colonized to do their own projects and share their results. If you do decide to work outside of that sphere, make the question of “who may speak” part of your daily reflection: at the end of every day, ask yourself what you are doing that could be considered an act of colonization, and whether it’s possible to work against that. If it’s not, take seriously the question of whether you should be doing that particular project, with that particular community, and make sure that the opinions and decisions of the community itself is part of whatever decision you make. When it comes time to publish, publish in indigenous languages (solicit help if need be) and publish in scholarly journals directly related to and/or managed by those communities. Cite as many indigenous scholars as possible, and use the site-specific theories they develop rather succumbing to the pressure of citing Euro-American theorists (especially if the only reason you’re doing so is because “everyone cites Foucault.”)

Most participants expressed a desire for support from their universities when trying to introduce multiple/global/alternative voices and perspectives in their classes. Those who experienced resistance to such initiative were often criticized for doing so and/or told to stick to already-in-use texts due to time constraints and feasibility. Indeed, many survey participants mentioned time and infrastructure as factors making it difficult for students to decolonize ethnomusicology in the classroom or to get actual support to implement their proposals:

There isn’t much of an established infrastructure for decolonized coursework, so implementing it requires a great deal of extra time that many say “should be spent on writing.” I’ve also expressed a strong desire to explore how we could set up a music theory sequence for music majors that is NOT based only on Western systems. This was met with interest, but also with a quick dismissal. This was mostly, again, for feasibility issues (regarding locating/paying competent instructors) and out of concern for how failing to educate in the Western system might limit the chance of occupational success in “the real world” (i.e., a Western institution should privilege Western theory, esp. since students are likely to stay in the region and get jobs that require such knowledge).

To the question “What can students do in the classroom (as TA’s, instructors, and/or students) to work against Euro/US-centric and colonial dispositions?” participants’ answers pointed toward the inclusion of diverse readings, languages, theorists, and musics in the classroom. They also highlighted the importance of questioning

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# Student Voices

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power structures within the classroom by sharing teaching time with guest-community leaders and calling on “minorities more often. Encourage them. Give them airtime.” Also, participants delved into the importance of promoting critical thinking, letting students know that “they can express to instructors, in respectful ways, when pedagogical techniques that might take colonial ways of thinking are being used.” A participant proposed to “Allow for more emotions rather than contained responses—more anger! more sadness! Build this explicitly into discussion, asking ‘How do you feel about this article’ and THEN ask for intellectualized conclusions.” Students in the classroom also called for expressing the idea “that *music* is not a general human category,” and proposed that their own students

normalize and encourage projects that look at non Euro/Americentric cultures and practices, using indigenous methodologies and theories, and encourage direct collaboration with the communities being studied whenever possible (even if just over email, Facebook, Skype, etc.). Make sure the research and result of student work are shared beyond the classroom through online blogs or public presentations, and instill in them always their responsibility to share the knowledge they’ve gained in the course of their time in your classroom.

## Sections 4. Institutions’ Roles Decolonizing Ethnomusicology

Regarding the possible role of professional organizations like SEM, ICTM, or IASPM in the decolonization of ethnomusicology, participants emphasized the importance of being “in more contact with the ethnomusicology programs (Universities, Institutes, etc) in Latin America. The International meetings look just for researchers from US, Canada, and Europe. In other words, we are working totally separate in same world.” Furthermore, they brought up the importance of continuing “the recent push to foster translation of key texts,” and to keep up efforts to both offer financial assistance and to open up spaces to “*dar voz a pesquisadores das periferias acadêmicas nas principais mesas e conferências*” (to give voice to researchers from the academic peripheries in the main panels and conferences). Following this line, another participant suggested:

It would be great if SEM can facilitate some kind of cultural/academic exchanges with similar societies in other countries. I know the American Folklore Society has been bringing in international scholars to their conferences to share not just their research but insights on how the discipline is practiced in other countries. Also realizing and being aware of the SEM’s own power/privilege/influence on scholarship on the global level (e.g. in some countries, you get more “points” publishing in an English journal such as *Ethnomusicology* for your tenure, and less points publishing in the language in the country where you teach or with a local publisher[]); meaning that scholars teaching outside of US and who lack the English language skills and institutional training and network that can allow them to publish on an English (and US based) journal or with an American publisher, suffers disadvantage over those who are native English speaker trained in the US tradition. This has to do with the tenure system in local settings that SEM has no control of, but at least having an awareness of the Society’s position in the international scholarship world could be the first step.

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The incoming member-at-large position of the Student Union is currently vacant, and an open call for nominations will be announced in the near future, before the year’s end. If you are interested in participating in a leadership role within the SU, you can also self-nominate for this position.

Connect with the [Student Union on Facebook](#) to keep informed of this and other announcements and projects.

# Student Voices

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## Section 5. Indigenous Ways of Knowing

The last section of the survey asked participants to reflect on the following: “What and how are Indigenous and/or ‘non-Western’ ways of knowing beneficial for ethnomusicologists (as researchers and teachers), ethnomusicological practices, and ethnomusicology more broadly?” Responses here pointed to common issues, most of which can be summarized by the view that Indigenous and/or “non-Western” ways of knowing are beneficial for ethnomusicology as they lead to processes of

unsettling traditional styles of research and writing, more thoroughly and accurately contextualizing research, diversifying topics and products of research, creating connections between academic products and practical applicability, questioning of academic assumptions, decentering of narratives focused on white men’s experiences and thoughts.

Although the survey was responded to by a relatively small number of participants, it is interesting to see how closely they parallel points regarding the ethnomusicology job market, as brought up by students in a previous survey conducted for *SEM Student News* Volume 12, Number 1. A common thread between these two groups of voices was their insistence on a reevaluation of the discipline of ethnomusicology. Specifically, participants proposed opening up the discipline to non-academic paths, research, and researchers. In many of our participants’ views, it is important to start a process of “radical re-thinking of the discipline.” What seems to be emerging here, in this particular regard, is a call for self-evaluation and self-critique involving our discipline, its academic context, and professional possibilities. Although this is not new, it is important to hear students’ voices in this crucial and ongoing dialogue to ensure a continuation of the field’s decolonization. Furthermore, with support of the Student Union, students can help in constructing new spaces, for current and future members, to talk about these and other issues in new ways within SEM. We encourage you to reach out to us, engage in action with us, and take a lead in putting these ideas into practice.

### SEM Student Union Blog

The SEM Student Union (SU) is composed of the society’s student membership and serves as a resource and voice for students in the society—an intrepid group at different stages in our education, and all ridiculously excited about ethnomusicology. In this blog, we share our experiences of music, education, and life.

Please join us and share your musical stories at [semstudentunion.wordpress.com](http://semstudentunion.wordpress.com), and email us at [semsublog@gmail.com](mailto:semsublog@gmail.com).

The SU blog also features a variety of series, including:

- [Ethnomusicology and Parenthood](#)
- [In Discipline: Talks from the European Side](#)
- [From the Field](#)
- [Textbook Review](#)
- [Ethnomusicology Student Groups](#)



# Thoughts from the Field

student impressions, perspectives, and experiences

By Sara Hong-Yeung Pun (Memorial University of Newfoundland)

Decolonizing ethnomusicology can take on many forms. As ethnomusicology students, our first step is to evaluate our own perspectives and positions and reflexively critique how Western institutions have shaped our thinking and thus action in the field. During my studies, I've thought back to specific instances when my colleagues have approached the notion of decolonizing ethnomusicology in their own unique way: one who taught me to listen on stage with his Iranian sitar because it was not his responsibility to amplify his sound (the very notion of amplification on stage is very "Western"); another who emphasized the importance of conducting research *with* the Inuit people rather than *about* them; and lastly, one who deeply questioned her own role in fieldwork in the wider scheme of colonialism while in Uganda. All of these people taught me to recognize my own role, listen carefully, approach research with warmth and humility, and reflect on my own influence and impact while in the field. Decolonizing ethnomusicology means to be human first and researcher second, and to thoughtfully consider and question our assumptions.

This column's contributors speak powerfully about assumptions: the way we think about our work, the way we approach our participants, the inherent biases in our personal views of "similar" groups, and the labels we use in scholarship that may not be culturally appropriate. Further, they impart a movement, pushing the boundaries of traditional scholarship to better connect our work with the communities we serve and not remain confined within academic walls. As the next generation of ethnomusicologists, it is our responsibility to consider our history in colonialism, our role as students and global citizens, and to take action. Decolonizing ethnomusicology should not be a mere academic exercise but a real and tangible value that is practiced in and outside of the field on a daily basis. It is through these small and meaningful steps that change can take place over time.



## DANIEL HAWKINS (Cornell University):

In their article "Decolonization Is Not a Metaphor," Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang argue that decolonization, in contrast to the "broad umbrella of social

justice [...], specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (2012, 21). The deployment of decolonization discourse for other purposes—for instance, calls to "use 'decolonizing methods,' or, 'decolonize student thinking' [—] can turn decolonization into a metaphor" (ibid., 1). This shift can then enact "a series of *moves to innocence* (Mawhinney, 1998) which problematically attempt to reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 3). Whether or not one accepts Tuck and Yang's conclusion, we should all heed their injunction to think hard on how our own work with "decolonization" directly relates (or doesn't) to on-the-ground conflicts over repatriation.

Two summers ago, I returned from an Indigenous resistance camp in the Pacific Northwest to a graduate program in ethnomusicology. The

considerable distance that I experienced between the two—greater, perhaps, than had I been studying political science, anthropology, or certainly native studies—makes "decolonizing ethnomusicology" a *more* crucial concern. In particular, our historical preoccupation with "music" extends a special invitation to metaphor that remains when our focus shifts to sound or even (and especially) listening. This inflexibility makes decolonizing ethnomusicology a more challenging but no less crucial concern. How can we, as ethnomusicologists, address decolonization without transforming ongoing struggles over Indigenous land and life into metaphors?

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# Thoughts from the Field

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**MELISSA ISAALY MENDOZA BERNABE (Benemerita Universidad Autonoma del Estado de Puebla):** Cultural diversity is something that provides a natural richness; the differences between even

the most similar communities are fundamental for supporting their roots and traditions. Despite this natural phenomenon, it can be challenging to find a proper methodology to describe these very differences. For example, Mexico is well known for its cultural diversity. Cultural groups often gather into communities and then further separate into smaller groups according to their geographic location. Regardless of their mutual proximity, the differences between one community and another are significant.

I came to this realization when I was doing fieldwork in San Miguel Tzinacapan. Tzinacapan is a small town located in the North Mountain Range (Sierra Norte) in Puebla, Mexico. The people of Tzinacapan speak Nahuatl, a language common throughout Mexican communities. Their version of Nahuatl, however, presents some salient differences in comparison to neighboring communities. During San Miguel's celebration, I was working hard on musical transcription<sup>1</sup> and suddenly realized my translation of the song's lyrics was substantially different from the meaning conveyed by their version of Nahuatl. This realization and insight taught me to be aware of the finer differences even among "similar" groups.

Currently, there are a considerable number of books about transcription available, but they do not explain what we should do when language differs drastically. After consulting native dancers and musicians, I referred to the Mexican transcription code; specifically Mendocino's code.<sup>2</sup> In the end, my transcription adopted some icons from the Mexican transcription code which became an invaluable resource for understanding the song as a whole.

I believe the best way to decolonize ethnomusicology is by broadening our pool of resources. For example, Western transcription methodology offers some graphic tools to Indigenous music; however, these resources can be impractical and even strange for local musicians. This can be

seen in Mexico where Indigenous music was never written in any explicit form and, instead, musicians use abstract images and icons to express their cultural heritage. This is why the Western concept of a music score can sometimes only represent just a tiny fraction of the whole musical meaning and phenomenon. We need to implement more tools and resources from other musical traditions to improve our scholarship and research in the future.

## Endnote

1. It is important to emphasise that dance and music for Mexican cosmogony are the same and both are encapsulated by the term "music."
2. Mendocino's code, or codex, documents local history and was created in 1540 by Mexican *tlacuilos*, the Nahuatl name for the people who wrote it.

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**JESSICA MARGARITA GUTIERREZ (University of California, Riverside):** As an undergraduate music student, I was immediately taken by ethnomusicology because of its interdisciplinary approach to

musics in their cultural and social contexts. After three years of strictly Western music history and theory, it was like a breath of fresh air; and, from that point forward, I sought out opportunities to broaden my understanding of the field. Now, as a first year graduate student, I am learning to weave together different disciplinary approaches in order to better understand how and why humans are musical. Although the field has only just begun to decolonize how we teach and think about music in positive ways, I feel the way academic institutions are structured and divided continues to confine and marginalize ethnomusicology solely within music studies. Furthermore, while ethnomusicologists become trained collaborators—with anthropologists, area and ethnic studies scholars, musicians, performers, the communities they work with, and more—their

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# Thoughts from the Field

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finished projects are often individually written scholarship that is then published and circulated only within institutional organizations.

In recent years, however, a broader movement toward public and applied work has renewed my faith in ethnomusicology. Ethnomusicologists are becoming activists in not only education, but also in cultural policy, conflict resolution, medicine, arts programming, and community music. As the field continues to be rejuvenated by new ideologies and opened to decolonization, my hope is that ethnomusicologists can continue to bridge disciplines as well as the gap between academia and the communities they serve.



## IRENE KARONGO HUNDLEBY (University of Otago):

It was early evening in North Malaita, Solomon Islands. The *keke* (crickets) cried, their rhythms persistently presaging the darkness.<sup>1</sup> My uncle cagily ambled

up the stairs and positioned himself across the room from me. This was the moment—the beginning. I knew that the forthcoming cross-examination would either push my research to the dark corners of the night or lead me on to successful fieldwork. This was not the time to deliver a sales pitch based upon an intellectual proposal. From a Western perspective, researcher objectives may appear astute; however, in Malaita, they are commonly “regarded as very superficial questions” and thinking (Gegeo and Watson-Gegeo 2001, 67). Forcing one’s work on a prospective community, without lengthy negotiation, is exploitative. So, just as our ancestors would have done, we sat, we ate, and we talked. For ten hours we shared our hearts, our philosophies and our ways, our histories and concerns. *How can we preserve who we are?*—no other objective would suffice. This was not about me. This was about our commitment to each other: about how we want to document who we are for future generations, and how we conceptualise our past and our present.

### Endnote

1. The *keke* begin to cry as the evening sun goes down. When the sun is completely gone, the crying ceases. Their

communal cry acts like a clock, reminding us the night is coming, and persists until the night has arrived. Their rhythms mark the arrival of our ancestors, who are more spiritually available to us in the night.

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## MIKE KOHFELD (University of Washington, Seattle):

During my first year as a student of ethnomusicology, I explored the various roles LGBTQ identities played within different musical cultures, from *santería* practice

in Cuba to cross-gender dance in Java. Encouraged by increasing representation of the diversity of gender and sexuality within ethnomusicological scholarship, I projected my own conception of these identities into various contexts, often equating local identities with Western ones to better understand the relationships between identity, representation, and performance practice.

Now, I have a better view of how the assumption that all cultures have analogues to the Western catch-all terms for varied sexual and/or gender identities (LGBTQ, queer, etc.) imposes neo-colonial paradigms of identity within and through scholarship. While these terms are still useful in many contexts, it is important that we engage with identity in ways that are appropriate to specific cultures, remaining cognizant of the various forces that shape the ways people live, discuss, and perform gender and sexuality. Addressing how Western colonization has informed binary systems of gender and sexuality within colonized societies is but one step. We must also question the notion that equates progress with Western efforts to dismantle these same systems of cis/heteronormativity in post-colonial societies. As I begin my second year of study, I plan to use the feedback provided to me by teachers, peers, and interlocutors to do my part in decolonizing ethnomusicology.



# Dear SEM,

This issue's topic provided an opportunity to reach out to scholars who have and continue to challenge the field of ethnomusicology through their work, and likewise challenge us as ethnomusicologists to reflexively critique our positionality and how we are implicated within (post/neo)colonial systems and enterprises. And so, we sought out professional ethnomusicologists who can speak to various experiences of and directions for decolonizing ethnomusicological praxes. We asked each respondent to reflect on the following prompt:

*Reflecting on ethnomusicology as a field and practice, (post) colonialism, and Euro/Americentrism, what advice can you offer to ethnomusicology graduate students in regards to decolonizing their own work and embracing global/alternative perspectives as activists in the classroom and/or communities within which they are engaged?*



## LIZ PRZYBYLSKI: Listening as Decolonial Practice

Decolonizing research and embracing global perspectives have, appropriately, been attracting increasing attention within academia. Graduate

students in ethnomusicology are already prepared with one of the most crucial skills for actively participating in these processes: listening. Further developing skills around what it means to listen can contribute to an important shift in our field. I propose that emerging researchers can do this by listening *deeply*, listening *widely*, and listening *personally*.

First, *listen deeply*. As you hone in on your research question, listen intently to many members who are part of the community in which you are doing your work. Listen for the questions and concerns people raise, allowing these to help refine the question(s) that first sparked your research. Deep listening positions you best to consider the following: whom does your research serve? What inspires your interest in the aspect of your research question that you plan to investigate? Is collaborative research a good fit for your area and question? My own research recently turned into a new, related area based on what I was hearing in conversations. Rappers were talking about how they used Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) in bilingual rap, which encouraged

me to listen more closely to Indigenous language use and revitalization. This had been peripheral in my previous study, but it was clearly coming up repeatedly as an area of relevance for the musicians with whom I was working, so I opened up new research into this area.

Second, *listen widely*. Pay attention to scholarship in your area, as well as outside of it. Converse with scholars, listen to musicians, and read voraciously. Listen for ideas that will help you open up your methodology, regardless of the musical culture in which you immerse yourself. If you have yet to encounter literature on decolonial methodology in coursework, seek this out on your own. Start with Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies*. Read a monograph that incorporates Indigenous methodology in research and writing, such as Shawn Wilson's *Research Is Ceremony*. Ask fellow researchers for the most helpful book, article, blog, or podcast about decolonizing research that they have come across. As you listen to the ideas you encounter across these sources, focus on how these can inspire productive shifts in your own approach to research.

Finally, *listen personally*. Listen to yourself for ways that you want your research to proceed, and the ways you eventually want to present your research. One productive way to process your ideas is to write regularly on these topics in a dedicated section of your research log. If autoethnography or critical personal narrative could be useful to you, incorporate

A response column by Davin Rosenberg, Eugenia Siegel Conte, and Sara Hong-Yeung Pun with respondents: Liz Przybylski (University of California, Riverside), Beverley Diamond (Memorial University of Newfoundland), Elizabeth Mackinlay (University of Queensland), and Edward Allen (Memorial University of Newfoundland).

At *SEM Student News*, we try to address the most pressing issues and diverse research fields for our student body and broader readership. Want to get advice from our network of peers, colleagues, and mentors? Email your questions to [semstudentnews@gmail.com](mailto:semstudentnews@gmail.com).

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them into your research plan. A volume like Mutua Kagendo and Beth Blue Swander's *Decolonial Research in Cross-Cultural Perspectives* provides examples. Allow yourself to value your own knowledge and background, even if these do not always fit into the traditional research paradigms you have encountered in university. Do not force your own thinking into linear narrative if this is not how you come to research and writing. Experiment with your writing style and use of media, and seek a way to honor your own voice.

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- Wilson, Shawn. 2008. *Research Is Ceremony*. Black Point, NS: Fernwood.



**BEVERLEY DIAMOND:** It's sobering, of course, to know that we struggle to decolonize universities and other public institutions at a moment when they are so driven by markets and metrics. The best options may be on the interpersonal level, in both formal and casual spaces. I suggest two issues about which some creative thinking/action could lead to small but significant change.

One is entitlement. It relates to the privilege that universities maintain but also to human rights and acknowledgement justly earned within many specific cultural systems. How might we create circulating modes of entitlement in teaching and learning contexts? By shifting the leadership roles? Validating culturally variable modes of learning? Considering who benefits by redefining the problems to be addressed? Linda Tuhiwai Smith's 25 projects for decolonizing methodologies (2012) remains an excellent source if you run out of ideas. Another consideration is raising awareness about who *assumes* they have entitlement and who assumes they don't. The old (feminist?) trick of giving out equal numbers

of beans to everyone in the class (including the teacher) and requiring one bean to be contributed to the central pot when a person wants to speak often works. Some spend quickly and then have to learn to listen; others realize that they are not using their entitlement to enter the conversation. In the university context, one form of entitlement is to knowledge itself; we tend to regard all knowledge as available for the taking. In Indigenous and many other cultural contexts, however, knowledge and responsibility are inseparable. If you can't accept the responsibility, you shouldn't hold the knowledge.

A second issue is coalition building. This starts, I think, with many conversations about how individuals experience discrimination differently (or not at all) and how we each view our positioning in relation to colonialism. The struggles of different groups are often incommensurable but perhaps not incompatible. And bear in mind that the simplest way to decolonize is to become humbler.

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**ELIZABETH MACKINLAY:** Decolonising ethnomusicology is an "ethico-onto-epistemo-logical" project which has been sitting with me for many years now. For me, this concern stems from being attentive to my position in the discipline, and indeed the positioning of the discipline itself, within white-settler-colonialism and associated possessive logics. When I first began thinking about the ways in which we might decolonise ourselves and the discipline, I framed decolonising theory as a way of working towards ethical, moral, and socially just research in our field. I was "yearning" (after hooks [1999]) for a more comfortable place to be as a white-settler-colonial-woman who found herself engaged in academic knowledge-making practices about, in relation to, and with Indigenous Australian performers.

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At that time decolonisation was a new word in my vocabulary, but it quickly came to represent many things: a promise, a process, and a product, the past and the present, at once unbounded and unfinished. I worked on projects and articles which I described as collaborative, advocacy based, driven by Indigenous Australian agendas and movements for self-determination, and comfortably called this “decolonising” work. However, I soon began to see the comfort as complacency and questioned whether the justice I was seeking in using a term like decolonisation was actually about “just-us.” Was such platitude to the people with whom I was working enough? Was my yearning conveniently masking a desire to absolve myself of white-settler guilt, and further, had decolonisation become simply a metaphor for re-producing the white-settler-colonial power and privilege within an ethnomusicological methodology I maintained I was questioning?

My thinking has now turned to “decoloniality”—a term which shifts us away from the economic, time- and space-driven emphasis in de/colonization to centre our focus onto the material, discursive nature of epistemology. The “decolonial” option (after Mignolo [2009]) asks us to revisit the ways in which colonial power and control sustains a hierarchy of difference through the kinds of knowledges we as researchers construct; to recognise, learn from, and enact processes for delinking from and fracturing the “colonial matrix” by doing research differently; engage in “border thinking,” which emerges from such decolonial spaces; and take on board the concept of “epistemic disobedience” to make decolonial futures possible. I am often asked by people: so what and now what? What can I actually *do*? For me, doing “decoloniality” is, by necessity, linked to knowing and being, and it is work that each and every one of us can begin. We can start by repositioning the work we do as ethico-onto-epistemo-logical. We can move towards decoloniality by placing relationship at the very centre of every performative move we make as ethnomusicologists in and out of the field. We can reimagine our ethnomusicological research and writing work as always already a refusal to be caught up in the desire to document, deconstruct, and “disseminate” in academic servitude to coloniality. Perhaps too, we

can accept that by enacting a willful disobedience to seek decoloniality it necessarily means we are forever on the way. I want to finish with this final question: are you ready to begin?

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**EDWARD ALLEN:** The extensive complexity of established First Nations, Inuit, and Metis knowledge systems is often immensely underestimated by external observers. Many Traditional Knowledge Keepers

have been reluctant to disseminate knowledge among external observers given the context of past and contemporary colonialism. When they do share, others have been dismissive *ad hominem*, corrupted or bastardized the meaning, and even attempted to appropriate the knowledge.

These barriers have left a lot of Canadians with no interface to gain access to these systems apart from the more well-known cultural artifacts. But cultural artifacts are an expression of a culture, and culture is reflective of (and perpetuates) a specific worldview based on a solidified and complex set of knowledge systems. Many tend to see cultural artifacts as shiny and aesthetically pleasing, much like the star that sits atop a Christmas tree, but the further below the star we look, the exponentially broader the tree gets.

If we act in the true sense of allyship and are prepared to respect the integrity of what we are given, then we may one day be invited back to the circles where these transformative knowledge systems are honored. Aboriginal issues and ideas like allyship can apply to everyone regardless of discipline and/or field of study. In order to be better citizens and researchers, we can all become more aware of our own biases, respect one another, and actively fight against discrimination—overt and subtle.



# “Personal-is-political”: Decolonial Praxis and the Future

(or how I learnt to stop worrying and tried to love neoliberalism)

By Simran Singh (Royal Holloway, University of London)

The word “decolonization” brings to mind histories of empire and domination. It simultaneously raises the need to challenge narratives that have emerged from these hierarchies imposed on sections of humanity, segments of geographies, and forms and ways of knowledge and knowing. In the term is both exhortation and appeal for empowerment and activism in forms such as social responsibility, the recognition of human rights, and cultural equity, pointing towards the inclusion of discourses that have been marginalized, neglected, or ignored.

In 1982, Charles Kiel called for “an insistence on putting music into play wherever people are resisting oppression” (407) as a means by which we conceive of decolonization. Movements in applied ethnomusicology share similar concerns with those of decolonization, that is, an opposition to colonialism, orientalism, and forms of Western hegemonies (Titon 2015). In many ways and for many people, the struggle against inequity continues, albeit in different milieus and circumstances. So, where Fanon spoke of the need for “literatures of combat” in the context of colonialism (1967, 93; see also Mackinlay 2015), rapper Ice-T identifies rap as “Hi-Tech Combat Literature” in the context of institutionalized racism and violence (Spady, Lee, and Alim 1999, 114).

Recent scholarly deliberations, particularly in the context of indigeneity, include conceiving of decolonization as a repossession of knowledges, values, and systems striving towards a continuity and endurance denied by colonial pasts (McLaughlin, Ah Sam, and Whatman 2006); and as a means to reclaim, rename, and rewrite particular histories (Smith 1999). Returning to Fanon, that which is colonized is the “Other” (1963), conceived as such through a form of violence enacted in an arbitration between forms of understanding and knowledge, all negotiated through disparity. In all of this is the recognition that formulations and constructions of knowledge have originated from spaces of power and privilege for a few. Decolonization articulates the need for confrontation, rejecting submission and docility, in calculated resistance to subjugation and exploitation.

In her work on Indigenous peoples in Australia, Elizabeth Mackinlay, to whom I owe the title of this article, introduces her paper as a “personal-is-political story and a narrative that speaks to the philosophical, theoretical, and methodological past and present” in recognition of colonial violence (2015, 334). Decolonization, here, is the

specific confrontation of this violence. In this sense, the site of decolonial praxis is that juncture where the political becomes personal. It is a space of awareness, focusing on agency and activity, widening our own identifications and considerations of our roles as ethnomusicologists and individuals in the world at large.

Critically analyzing this “personal-is-political” space and stance, through my own subjectivity, helped in determining my own spaces of responsibility as a researcher. Theory, method, and practice begin with that which is political, in recognition of ontological and epistemological interfaces and contestations. Confrontations such as these determine stances of representation, both my own and of those I study. What is political becomes personal—in the interrogation of my own roles, responsibilities, and representations both inside and outside the academy.

Decolonization . . . is the specific confrontation of (colonial) violence. In this sense, the site of decolonial praxis is that juncture where the political becomes personal. It is a space of awareness, focusing on agency and activity, widening our own identifications and considerations of our roles as ethnomusicologists and individuals in the world at large.

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# “Personal-is-political”: Decolonial Praxis and the Future

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As scholars, this calls for plurality in our practical uses of knowledge, scholarship, and understanding. In the field, I have often found myself in my own spaces of arbitration, negotiating my discomfort with the privilege I might have as an academic and the responsibilities of representation in my work with musicians, and then again, with my own ignorance of forms of knowing and being.

In this sense, Paulo Freire’s work on praxis (1972), focused through “conscientization” in particular, continues to have practical use. This is a process of developing a consciousness that can provoke social change, in the understanding of reality/ies, exercised through critical uses of theory, application, evaluation, and reflection. The backdrop of social change is important because it is an unavoidable reality one encounters, by chance or design, just by being in the world. Here, Giroux’s assertion that “every educational act is political and that every political act is pedagogical” (2011, 176) makes decolonization an ongoing project for scholars. As both a theoretical resource and a productive practice, decolonization draws into focus the interrogation and resistance of power as dominance. In doing so, it points towards a “vocabulary in which it becomes possible to imagine power working in the interests of justice, equality and freedom” (ibid., 5) through formation and articulation. This occurs in both the social and political spaces where we conduct our fieldwork and in the scholarship we present.

The discipline of ethnomusicology continues in its endeavors—its subjects, approaches, and models—to engage with issues of subjugation and marginalization through research and scholarship shaped by concerns such as advocacy, education, and intervention.

Ethnomusicology is fortunate in its ability to encompass pluralities of peoples and musics, often challenging traditional boundaries of the discipline—a form of knowledge decolonization in itself. As academics, all of this allows us to challenge our own knowledges and understandings; tools such as pedagogical strategies and research methodologies allow us to question that which we deem as such in the first place. The decolonization project, then, is one that ideally allows us to “actively transform knowledge rather than consume it” (Giroux 2011, 7). As ethnomusicologists, our responsibility is a constant critique of privilege and positionality in the academy. Decolonizing knowledge is the incorporation of theory and praxis, combining creativity and analysis, and imagination and knowledge, in what is inherently political research.

As ethnomusicologists, our responsibility is a constant critique of privilege and positionality in the academy. Decolonizing knowledge is the incorporation of theory and praxis, combining creativity and analysis, and imagination and knowledge, in what is inherently political research.

At this time, it is also useful to consider that cultures of knowledge—encompassing research, teaching, and learning, where education has its own place and utilitarian value—interact with competitive markets inside and outside faculties, institutions, and sectors. Quantitative structures such as admission, governance, and financing have their role in defining course and curriculum; discussions on gauging and mapping quality engage with those on processes and impact, raising issues of commercialism in education. These deliberations indicate a sort of academic consumerism, pointing to an unavoidable neoliberalism in academic systems and a subsequent narrowing of space for research less favoured by market forces. From this, one could argue that the future of the academy holds the possibility of a creeping colonization by the market. The question remains how best to integrate research cultures such as those that consider communities and individuals in dilemmas of economic,

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# “Personal-is-political”: Decolonial Praxis and the Future

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political, and social marginalization and subjugation, past and present, with that of the market and its criteria. Decolonial praxis, as we understand it today, may well have to develop a new vocabulary, narrative, and plan for the neoliberal future.

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# Decolonizable Spaces in Ethnomusicology

By Luis Chávez and Russel Skelchy (University of California, Davis)



*"Decolonization which sets out to change the order of the world is, obviously, a programme of complete disorder."*  
Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* ([1963] 2004)

Decolonization is not a new idea to the field of ethnomusicology. In 2006, the Society for Ethnomusicology Annual Meeting, hosted by the University of Hawai'i, featured the theme "Decolonizing Ethnomusicology." As stated in their call for papers, the goal was to invite "critical discussion of the field and of its relationship to the people and the music we study."<sup>1</sup> Do ethnomusicologists still believe in having this critical discussion? Do we separate people from the music we study? What is a critical discussion of the field in 2016? Addressing each of these questions begins with understanding decolonization from a variety of viewpoints. Accordingly, two lines of decolonial thought inform this essay: Native American Studies and Postcolonial Studies.

The term "decolonization" is often used metaphorically in humanities and education studies scholarship to describe an array of processes involving social justice, resistance, sustainability, and preservation (Tuck and Yang 2012; Bishop 2005; Cook-Lynn 1998). However, we argue against using the word "decolonization" in ethnomusicology as metaphor, because decolonization demands a level of political engagement different from these other projects. Decolonization implies fundamental changes in relations of power, worldviews, our roles as scholars, and our relationships to the university system as an industry. As Linda Tuhiwai Smith observes, "decolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as a long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power" (Smith [1999] 2008, 98). Divesting colonial power involves repatriating land and resources and transforming existing paradigms of power and privilege created by settler colonialists. A discourse of decolonizing ethnomusicology should not propagate the term as a descriptive signifier while overlooking the issues mentioned above. Furthermore, the objective of decolonizing ethnomusicology must address colonial, or colonialist, representations of Indigenous peoples' music.

Ethnography in ethnomusicology is both a process for and product of conducting qualitative research. Ethnomusicology's reliance on these research methodologies, in various ways, obstructs how we, as a discipline, understand and represent music and people. At this point we must ask ourselves: are there alternative ways of engaging in ethnography that facilitate greater responsibility for and representation of communities we work with? Words such as "interlocutor" and "informant" create a prescriptive binary subject/object relationship. Reconfiguring this relationship de-centers the position of researchers as all-knowing specialists in a particular music culture and changes the balance of power.

Additionally, we propose ethnomusicologists engage in co-authored projects highlighting partnerships between participants and ethnomusicologists, and work emphasizing community-based participatory research. We envision co-authorship as research produced—using various modes of communication: written, oral, or performative—by the researcher and community, where ownership is mutually shared between those involved. The purpose of co-authored works is, among other things, to disrupt the predominant voice of the ethnographer and increase their responsibility toward the people being represented. Community-based participatory research engages with and includes multiple members of Indigenous and local communities in data gathering and cedes ownership and representation of their pasts and ways of understanding (Atalay 2012, 4). Each of these possibilities creates new spaces for a multiplicity of knowledges and the possibility of undoing "Western" academic hierarchies of

At this point we must ask ourselves: are there alternative ways of engaging in ethnography that facilitate greater responsibility for and representation of communities we work with?

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# Decolonizable Spaces in Ethnomusicology

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knowledge (Sefa Dei 2010, 77). Creating these spaces also accounts for the project of provincializing European thought made universal by modern imperialism and (third-world) nationalism (Chakrabarty 2000). These two solutions begin to address *what* decolonization involves and *how* it can be done.

*SEM Student News*' choice to feature this theme signifies that decolonization remains an unresolved matter in the discipline. However, decolonization in the field of ethnomusicology is not a complete rejection of all previous research or "Western" knowledge—decolonizing ethnomusicology is about rethinking our concerns and worldviews (Smith [1999] 2008, 39). Thus, rather than being immersed in metaphor and issues of social justice, our definition of decolonization connects to broader political implications of Indigenous sovereignty, and asserts that ethnomusicologists must address problems of methodology and approach.

## Acknowledgement

The title of this essay is inspired by Ricardo Trimillos' (2008) article "Histories, Resistances, and Reconciliations in a Decolonizable Space: The Philippine Delegation to the 1998 Smithsonian Folklife Festival," *The Journal of American Folklore* 121 (479): 60–79.

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# Decolonizing through Sound

can ethnomusicology become more audible?

By Brendan Kibbee (City University of New York)

One of the first issues to address when thinking through how to "decolonize ethnomusicology" is how we might reorganize our disciplinary practices to broaden our base of ideas and thinkers. The troubling

reality is that ethnomusicology undervalues all but a select few forms of intellectual work, allowing some people to thrive while a great deal of potential contributors are denied a place in our disciplinary sphere.

More specifically, we privilege the written word—"publish (books and articles) or perish"—much more than performance, community engagement, and multimedia scholarship (documentaries, podcasts, etc.)

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# Decolonizing through Sound

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that could bring our voices to the fore, along with the voices of our collaborators and the music that we all produce. Why is it that in a field dedicated to sound culture, perhaps more so than any other, we continue to value the legible over the audible, with the sung and the played at the bottom of the hierarchy?

Western civilization, we might say, has sometimes shown a built-in bias against listening as an intellectual practice. This situation has more to do with colonialism than one might initially expect. Charles Hirschkind (2006) has described the way that European prejudices regarding colonial subjects' intellectual abilities often followed from a Kantian belief where "the act of listening came to be seen as a danger to the autonomy of the enlightened liberal subject" (31). He explains that for European visitors to the Arab world, "Muslims seemed too involved with surface and externalities—the *sound of reciting voices*, the prescribed movements of the body at prayers, rules of fasting and ablutions, and so on—all of which defined a kind of life incompatible with more refined modes of reason, understanding, and religious devotion" (32; emphasis added).

As colonial powers reorganized the economic global order, they also created a system that tied social mobility to the ability to assimilate European schooling. This caused an enduring legacy of difficulties for the colonized. The ongoing underinvestment in global

subaltern populations has left a good education out of reach for many talented students, and many more students start at a disadvantage by being schooled in colonial languages that they do not speak at home—this is an especially acute problem in Africa where many young students learn in languages that are foreign to them, with few options for remedial courses. Beyond these issues, a major barrier keeping postcolonial voices out of the academic sphere has been our inability to recognize intellectual depth in local practices of knowledge production and transmission, many of them having a strong emphasis on aurality. In other words, we need to be taught how to listen.

If we start by rethinking the ways that we communicate with each other, within our discipline, we can loosen the hold that the written word has exercised on academia . . .

Making ethnomusicology more audible would be a step in this direction. Our discipline, since it is rooted in music and sound, should be at the forefront of academia in showing ways that audible intellectual practice can be done. If we start by rethinking the ways that we

communicate with each other, within our discipline, we can loosen the hold that the written word has exercised on academia, ultimately creating a body of knowledge that is more dynamic, more accessible, and that accommodates a greater number of intellectual approaches and learning styles both at home and around the globe. As we move toward the distant goal of working with and within local practices of knowledge production from throughout the postcolonial world, we can start with forms closer to home. We could be producing and listening to documentaries (audio or film), lectures, conversations, interviews, radio segments, and podcasts. We need to reorient our intellectual production and consumption to engage our voices and our senses of hearing to a greater degree. We would be starting to free ourselves from a disciplinary order that relegates sound to a lower tier of intellectual seriousness.

In making this kind of work viable, we would have to change our system of values, both in terms of what we consider as "serious scholarship," and in material values bound to job positions and tenure. We would have to create institutionally sanctioned and peer-reviewed forums for audible forms of academia. Some venues for spreading our ideas through sound already exist: since last year, SEM has published a quarterly podcast; some streaming lectures from previous

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# Decolonizing through Sound

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annual meetings are online; Afropop.org's hip-deep series has always done a good job of bringing scholars on to discuss their work in depth in a radio format. But these venues are few and far between, and they do not carry the same weight as published writings.

Teaching ourselves to center our intellectual practice on listening is not the endgame in decolonizing ethnomusicology, but it is an important step. It is a step that could help foster collaborations and partnerships with people that we meet in the field and that can help us

to be better communicators of our ideas in non-traditional circumstances. This project could bring about other positive outcomes as well. It would provide a vast upgrade to written transcriptions in making our colleagues more keenly perceptive of nuances in tone, timbre, pitch, and rhythmic feeling. Cognitive psychologists generally agree that listening is as effective as reading for general comprehension (see Gernsbacher, Varner, and Faust 1990); as we come to embrace neurodiversity at all levels of education, audible academia could help create

spaces in our field for people with a wide array of abilities and disabilities.

As ethnomusicologists, we preach that sound-based forms of communication are fundamental to how people come to understand their world. We are becoming increasingly aware of ways that the aural has been undervalued in many places, including in colonial endeavors. It follows that promoting the sound-based understandings within our own field—practicing what we preach—should be at the center of our disciplinary project.

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## Reflecting on the Pulse Nightclub

On June 12, 2016, queers of color were gathered with their friends and allies for Latin Night at Pulse in Orlando, Florida, celebrating identity and community amidst the sounds of salsa, reggaeton, and hip-hop. The nightmare that ensued was a terrible reminder that people of color and LGBTQIA community members are still targets of systematic bigotry across the country.

The following two pieces, also published in an *Ethnomusicology Review/Sounding Board* special issue, are a response to the Pulse nightclub tragedy, addressing the impact of Pulse on our work as music scholars. You can read the entire *Ethnomusicology Review/Sounding Board* issue at [ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu](http://ethnomusicologyreview.ucla.edu).

## Mad Planet

By Jeff Roy (University of California, Los Angeles)

My Pulse nightclub was a small, dimly lit, underage nightclub called Mad Planet. Situated on the border of the hood and Milwaukee's slowly gentrifying hipster bastion Riverwest, Mad Planet attracted a gloriously freakish assortment of shapes, sizes, orientations, and musical tastes. The dance floor was a magnet for goths, hippies and queens who came together every Thursday night to challenge the segregated landscape of the city through spirited dance competition.

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# Mad Planet

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Slithering onto the dance floor to the screeching sound of Marilyn Manson, the goths in their black-robed, white-powdered luminescence frowned in disgust as they performed their signature goth-style dance move—a backwards lean and slowly scooping, side-to-side movement. The more dedicated the goth, the further the lean without tumbling over. Leaping onto the dance floor to the melodious, soulful sounds of Lauryn Hill, the queens “strummed their pain” with someone nearby, locking lips during intermittent instrumental interludes. The more dedicated the queen, the more meticulous in her recitation of Hill’s lyrics and vocal riffs.

I entered Mad Planet’s schizophrenic dance floor to test the limits of my own working-class whiteness. Born out of wedlock to bicultural lesbian parents, I trespassed the boundaries of subcultural identification almost on a yearly basis. For a time, I slunk up to the club with black hair and nail polish. Then, after falling ill with mono (which, I determined, was brought about by an excess of negative thinking), I grew my hair out to my shoulders and began eating granola. I proclaimed my gender queer-dom, sporting rainbow necklaces, bright colors, and a couple of filthy dreadlocks.

Mad Planet was an incubator for social misfits who had internalized the stigmatization they faced outside of the nightclub walls on the basis of race, gender expression, and sexual codes of morality. The place permitted us to share our feelings of impotence with each other and, through the performative labor of our bodies, revise and reconfigure them ever so delicately into something undeniably strange and beautiful.

It has been said that failure sometimes offers creative and cooperative ways of being in the world, even as it forces us to face the dark side of life, love and libido (Halberstam 2011). For a shooter whose failure was one of belonging, violence emerges as the only expressive outlet for feelings of abjection. But his deliberately destructive actions at the Pulse nightclub if anything shows us how important it is to make room in our societies for failure—failure of heteronormativity, failure of phenotypical belonging, failure of cultural and behavioral prescription/adherence—so that we who fail society are found and recuperated by our kin on the dance floor.

There is beauty in failure.

Later, participating on the front lines of activism in India and the U.S. for nearly a decade, I have seen music and dance lift our queer and trans sisters and brothers out of feelings of abjection. While this violence upon queer liberation still hurts badly, it strengthens my resolve to find a way of embracing the failures of others on this mad planet and dance again.



Photo of the author with the Dancing Queens in Mumbai; photo by Jeff Roy

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# After Pulse

## political movements and the dance floor

By Craig Jennex (McMaster University)

“It’s gay pride, not black pride”—a spectator’s claim during the 2016 Toronto Pride Parade as quoted in the *Globe and Mail*—is emblematic of the vitriolic response to a brief sit-in by Black Lives Matter-Toronto (BLM) that halted one of the world’s largest Pride Parades for thirty minutes. Before ending their protest, BLM made nine demands of Pride’s organizers. Although over-shadowed by the more sensationalized request to curb police participation in Pride, six of BLM’s nine demands relate to fostering sites of music participation for LGBTQ people of color, including a call to reinstate a stage for South Asian music performance and additional funding for Blockorama, a dance music party for queer African diasporic people.

Such requests underscore that many queer people of color consider participation in music cultures to be vital to recognizing themselves as part of a larger community. To be sure, bodies listening and moving together on the dance floor can be evidence of queer lives and queer power. Historically, underground dance venues are spaces where queers can explore ideas of identity and community (see, for example, Fikentscher, Lawrence, Echols, Dyer).

BLM’s requests, then, seem to fit into the broader theme of the parade, in which participants honored the victims murdered at Pulse Nightclub in Orlando by carrying placards bearing the names and ages of victims and halting at 3PM to observe a moment of silence in their memory.

Unfortunately, public reactions to BLM’s demands suggest that music spaces in which queer people of color gather are understood as inconsequential to larger projects of LGBTQ politics—and that many Canadians still think of gayness as necessarily coupled with whiteness. Sue-Ann Levy, of the *National Post*, argued that this year’s parade was “in memory of the victims of the Orlando

massacre” not “allowing one loud group to make a political statement.”

Published responses, which ignore the intersection of race and sexuality and reify the hegemonic whiteness of LGBTQ narratives, are unsurprising given that these BLM activists comprise part of a long lineage of queer activists of color who have been erased from the stories we tell about LGBTQ politics. In fact, many attendees and participants at Toronto Pride may have been unaware of the fact that most people killed at Pulse were racialized Latinx queers.

What is lost in this discourse is that BLM’s protest is precisely what the massacre at Pulse requires of us: to make an aggressive stand for spaces in which queer people of color can amass as a collective under the pulsing rhythms of dance music and to recognize the political potential of such gatherings.

And as music scholars we must also teach the erroneousness of claims that these spaces can ever be disconnected from the social politics articulated by people of color.

The affective charge of queer collectivity is regularly predicated on black and latinx musical traditions and forms of social dance that come out of communities of color. Moments of togetherness on the dance floors at Toronto Pride 2016 were undeniably made possible by the labor, traditions, and genealogies of black and brown bodies. This should alter our understanding of these pasts, change how we conceptualize LGBTQ experience in the present, and enable more just collective visions for the future.

Queer music scholarship must lead this initiative and teach, widely and voraciously, how to hear these politics.

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[ethnomusicology.org/group/SemStudentNews](http://ethnomusicology.org/group/SemStudentNews)

# "You've Never Heard This?"

reconsidering students' commonalities

By Solmaz ShakeriFard (University of Washington, Seattle)



Whether in our own graduate seminars or in classes that we teach to others, how

strongly do we press ourselves to comprehend life experiences that are profoundly different from our own and to be inclusive of their resulting perspectives on music?

In my first year as an ethnomusicology PhD student in the United States, I was a teaching assistant for a class on U.S. popular music. Having grown up in Iran with limited access to North American popular culture, and despite living in Canada for a decade prior to moving to the U.S., the course material was partially new to me. While familiarizing myself with the content of the course, I felt excluded from the textbook authors' intended readership. On multiple occasions I encountered general assumptions such as, "We all have heard X artist or danced to Y genre of music at some point in our lives." I felt anxious as I needed to seek the basic information I lacked about the artists and genres of music in discussion. In my own trajectory (which is not as rare as it may seem), I was an undergraduate music major who frequently felt left out of meaningful discussions because my overall musical experiences did not match that of mainstream, North

American students. When I first arrived in Canada, to audition for a BFA in classical piano, I had never heard an opera nor attended a dance performance and had no experience with 20<sup>th</sup>-century Western art music. I graduated with distinction from my performance studies, but throughout the process, I struggled with the recognition that some concepts and even terms were beyond my reach.

As ethnomusicology students, we attune ourselves to a wide array of perspectives on music. But as we engage in conversations about music in our classrooms or communities, how truly inclusive are we of such multiplicities? How critically do we read the textbooks that purport to teach our students? How critically do we think about how *we* address our students and colleagues?

I would like to challenge us all to go beyond the academic literature and the divisive media, and try to learn about those who are joining our communities, our classrooms, and our cohorts.

The media documents changing demographics within our communities, regardless

of where we are, with social transformations happening at a rapid pace. In a world of widespread socio-political and economic instability, large numbers of people are relocating to safer places because of war, drought and famine, and religious and ethnic persecution. Growing diversity in the cities of Europe and North America, in particular, means that we need to recognize that those in our communities, classrooms, and workplaces could have life and musical experiences that we might not even be able to comprehend. It is as ethnomusicologists and musical activists that we must think critically about inclusivity, varied perspectives and practices, and distinctive meanings of our words and actions.

A recent news report about the refugees arriving on Mediterranean shores pointed out that children who were born and raised in war-struck regions could not imagine anything but violence, fear and flight from unsafe places, and loss and confusion of displacement. These children, youths, and adults may be among our students and may be our colleagues in a few short years. I would like to challenge us all to go beyond the academic literature and the divisive media, and try to learn about those who are joining our communities, our classrooms, and our cohorts. Let us learn about their experiences without judging them. Let us appreciate the perspectives

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# "You've Never Heard This?"

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they might offer that would have remained unknown to us otherwise. This, of course, does not mean essentializing the experiences of any particular group of people, as life experiences are too nuanced to be generalized in the context of any cultural/educational exchange. Let us not call on the only girl wearing hijab in the classroom to share her experiences, but rather express our openness in a way

that invites everyone to share their thoughts and experiences. Let us not assume anything about others' musical experiences.

In light of today's increasing instability, which is leading to the transformation of our communities, classrooms, and workplaces, I would like to challenge us all to reconsider our definition and implementation of "inclusivity." Let us try to imagine, for instance, what it

could mean for a freshman in college to have never heard of Pavarotti, to have no reference point as to what "Broadway music" might be, to have never watched a Michael Jackson music video, and to have never heard the "Ode to Joy." I would like to propose that the kind of perspective that this student can offer needs to be valued and that we embrace such contributions to our discourse about music.

## Postcolonial Institutional Ethnography

discovering the social organization of music learning in a postcolonial, Latin American context

By Guillermo Rosabal-Coto (Universidad de Costa Rica)



In my recent doctoral dissertation, I explored how music learning socialization is organized by macro structures like government, religion, and schooling in a postcolonial, Latin American context. I worked with nine music teachers in Costa Rica from the public or private school systems as well as from separate music schools. In the ontology and practice of institutional ethnography (Campbell and Gregor 2004; DeVault 1996, 2006, 2013; Smith 2005), data collection and analysis begin with and return to the study of participants' daily lived experiences. Thus, I considered the nine teacher participants experts in their everyday

doings as coordinated by institutional structures or processes, whose financial, political, or educational agendas are foreign to their own music learners' local worlds. In the light of Latin American postcolonial thinking (Castro-Gómez 2008; Mignolo 2007; Quijano 2000; Sousa Santos 2012; Souza Silva 2011), I focused on how institutionalized notions and practices—as forms of colonization—precipitate dislocation, misrepresentation, differentiation, and exclusion as social practices in music learning. In doing this, I developed my own theoretical-methodological approach that I call *Postcolonial Institutional Ethnography* (PCIE).

In the first phase of my analysis, I engaged in a thematic discussion of the participants' lifelong experience as both learners and teachers, using "Western" research analysis categories of inequality and difference in music such as cultural consonance/dissonance, formal/informal, gender, race, nationality, and class. I realized that such categories can subsume unique, everyday bodily experience into conceptual abstractions (Smith 2005), distant from the material and socio-historical roots of the specific colonization processes that have shaped Latin American music and music education. This made me overlook two specific macro-organized processes that influenced music learning—(a) the social construction of masculinity under machismo and (b) structurally-based material access to music learning—because they appeared to be outside the "music proper." It was therefore necessary to customize a PCIE model to this ethnography's particular postcolonial context. PCIE analyzes the relationships that coordinate the social organization of music learning in the participants' actualities, bringing together postcolonial thinking and concepts, and institutional ethnography.

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# Postcolonial Institutional Ethnography

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As music learners, the study participants were coerced to modify or shun their time, emotional and cognitive make-up, history, memories, and body resources in favor of the interests and values upheld by those who own “Western” art music knowledge and control music learning: parents, teachers, peers, or principals. In my study, those who own “Western” art music knowledge and control music learning articulate a universalizing concept of “the correct human beings/learners/artists” in their comments, judgments, and instructions as they interact with learners. For instance, a participant recalled fearing that his former violin teacher would become aware that he played in a mariachi ensemble, because the music education discourse disseminated by government institutions denigrates playing in such non-art, non-European ensembles as “the worst thing you could do with your instrument.” Another study participant explained how former school peers excluded him because his skin color and accent did not match the ideal Costa Rican national identity depicted in national music, which is based on Enlightenment ideals and the French Republican model.

As music learners, my participants were constructed as inferior subalterns by parents, teachers, and peers, in need of conversion or improvement of their bodies, based on ability-based notions and practices that operate similar to the racist discourse that aims at transforming non-civilized peoples into the image and likeness of the “Western” civilized, white, Christian individual. The latter discourse sustained the primary, “large-scale, one-sided accumulation of lands, wealth, power, and unpaid labor” by Western Europe (Wynter 2003, 295; see also Quijano 2000), which “was to lay the basis of its global expansion from the fifteenth century onwards” (Wynter 2003, 291), and has been updated in the form of a development discourse that rules current asymmetrical trade and political relations between “developed” and “undeveloped” countries (Souza Silva 2011). The logic for this kind of colonization is known as *coloniality of power* (Mignolo 2007; Wynter 2003).

However, as music teachers, the study participants partially or fully exercise resistance to colonization at different stages throughout their lives and on their own terms. They refused to *know, learn, and be* through the givens of hegemonic knowledge imposed by colonial structures. They uncovered their inner beings and experienced their capacities to know, learn, and be despite the fact that their bodily beings were denied, punished, and corrected in the name of modernity, progress, and development. They participated in/performed *epistemic disobedience*. One remarkable instance is a study participant who defied her “inferior female” self-image, forged during years of music learning under her father’s *machismo*-based male authority. She successfully found strength within her own gender identity and sought means and venues for learning that were once forbidden by the Latin American construction of masculinity associated with colonial power (Holter 2005).

While undertaking this research, I realized that I too had participated for many years, as both student and teacher, in a system perpetuating colonialism. It was time to understand (how) music learners . . . felt in their bodily selves, and challenge philosophical and pedagogical frameworks . . .

While undertaking this research, I realized that I too had participated for many years, as both student and teacher, in a system perpetuating colonialism. It was time to understand music learners through how self-image, sensations, and perceptions about music socialization and other social actors felt in their bodily selves, and challenge philosophical and pedagogical frameworks that make universalistic claims about music and education that antagonize and colonize our ethnicity and socio-material realities.

Beyond my own study, researchers and teachers in non-Latin American contexts may also need to become more fully aware of how they potentially construct inferior, illegitimate *others* on a daily basis; this is done, often without self-awareness, through the imposition of a universal descriptive statement of *the human* that reproduces the status of hegemonic classes,

elites, or institutions and a supporting social order (Quijano 2000; Wynter 2003). What I have defined as a subaltern music learner may resonate with experiences of a First Nations student living on an Aboriginal reserve

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# Postcolonial Institutional Ethnography

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in Canada, or the urban Caribbean immigrant, or an African American teenager in a North American city. None of the above may necessarily feel a relevant connection to “Western” art music or its learning socialization, and becoming a “Western” art musician often requires these learners to shun their local music world. Indeed, while such constructions may take forms and manifest in experiences not necessarily addressed by my study, similar feelings and experiences may be shared by a great many people in the “Western” world where the imposition of “Western” ideals goes largely unchallenged. It is time to understand music learners through their bodily selves. We should listen to the bodily manifestations of disjuncture in their attempts to comply with pedagogical practices, assessments, and cultural standards and recognize them as potential sites of colonization. We may need to become epistemically disobedient.

We should listen to the bodily manifestations of disjuncture in their attempts to comply with pedagogical practices, assessments, and cultural standards and recognize them as potential sites of colonization. We may need to become epistemically disobedient.

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# In Search for Decolonialized Perspectives

## in Singapore's cultural politics

By Gene Lai (Wesleyan University)



The imprints of colonialism are still visible in the legislations and the style of government in Singapore even since attaining independence from the British in 1963. Likewise, historical documents suggest that certain regulations, such as the People's Action Party (PAP) ban on music in religious processions in 1973, contain remnants of British colonialism (Sykes 2015, 397). Concomitantly, while studying *urumi mēlam*, South Indian Tamil folk drum ensembles in Singapore, I faced discrepancies among perspectives provided by state media, officials, and *urumi mēlam* musicians.

Much ethnomusicological and musicological discourse about music and cultural politics in Singapore borrows extensively from state media and government documents for official perspectives, most of which reference legislation influenced by colonial ideologies. On the other hand, some researchers rely on the perspectives of their interlocutors, who often blame the authorities for their enforced silence. Consequently, in both of these cases, deriving a one-sided argument is inevitable. The lack of written discourse, and mixed perspectives, about *urumi mēlam* in Singapore motivated me to further investigate and analyze the musicians' struggles.

From the government's point of view, *urumi mēlam* are gang-related ensembles that bring rowdy behavior and noise pollution to public spaces. According to Tamil music scholar Jim Sykes, the authorities only consider *urumi* acceptable when they stay within the vicinity of a temple, which happens quietly within railings set up for the *thaipusam* procession, or in places where drumming has been explicitly authorized. Even though most Singaporeans find *urumi mēlam* essential to Hindu festivals, *urumi* performances at unauthorized times and places constitute "noise pollution" (Sykes 2015, 393) that generates complaints from expatriates being deprived of sleep.

In contrast, responses I gathered from members of the Singapore Tamil Hindu community assert that *urumi mēlam* are an important emblem of their community. Furthermore, they unanimously agree that *urumi mēlam* music is an essential element in eliciting trance states during religious rituals. Hindu devotees believe that music performed during *thaipusam*<sup>1</sup> and *thai pongal*<sup>2</sup> is a way to thank Lord Murugan for his blessing. Moreover, music is also a form of encouragement for devotees who will carry the *kavadi*<sup>3</sup> on a 4-kilometer (2.5-mile) trail that can take as long as five hours. However, when accompanying devotees carrying the *kadavi*, *urumi mēlam* often perform at volumes beyond the government's acceptable levels.

Instead of uncritically embracing perspectives from either side, I sought a research method offering more holistic perspectives. A possible solution came in Zoe Sherinian's *Tamil Folk Music as Dalit Liberation Theology* (2014). In this groundbreaking book, Sherinian effectively uses Timothy Rice's dialogic ethnography (1994) to call for critical examinations of Indian music scholarship, while urging scholars and researchers to embrace marginalized South Asian musical practices. She achieves her research goals by focusing on three levels of advocacy within South Asian ethnomusicology: 1) musical sound; 2) ideology transmitted through music; and 3) agents who produce, use, and propagate music (Sherinian 2014, 54). Sherinian's research methodology not only empowers the voices of the suppressed and marginalized, but it also allows scholars a broader vantage point that extends beyond South Asian music scholarship. I decided to adopt Sherinian's research methodology and create interview questions under the guidance of Clifford Geertz's "thick description" (1973), and use Mark Slobin's (1993) superculture, subculture, and interculture framework to further organize my field data.

As a graduate student from a foreign university who has no connections in the Singapore government, seeking an interview with a state official is beyond my reach. I instead turned to government documents, state newspaper articles, government websites, and interviews on TV and radio as primary sources for my research. In the spirit of dialogic ethnography and thick description, I gathered as many opinions as I could by conducting interviews with musicians and members of the Singaporean Tamil Hindu community. I pulled together data obtained from both sides with the guidance of Slobin's tripartite framework.

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# In Search for Decolonialized Perspectives

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By critically examining perspectives from both sides, I was better able to grasp the impacts of colonialism on Singaporean cultural politics. I observed how *urumi mēlam* operate in public spaces, even as they comply with local regulations. Fully decolonizing ethnomusicological discourses about former European colonies is difficult, and relying too much on perspectives gathered dialogically may invite uncritical bias. To obtain a look at the big picture, we should strive for a good balance among perspectives from both sides, thus enabling a more holistic standpoint that can help keep colonialist ideologies in check.

## Endnotes

1. The *thaipusam* festival is celebrated between the end of January and the beginning of February. The festival is dedicated to Lord Murugan, one of the most important Hindu deities worshipped by Hindus in Southeast Asia. During the festival, Hindu devotees seek blessings, fulfill vows, and offer thanks to Lord Murugan. They show their appreciation to Lord Murugan by performing any one of four types of *kavadi* when they walk the *thaipusam* procession.
2. *Thai pongal* is a four-day, Tamil harvest festival, which is normally celebrated in mid-January.
3. *Kavadi* is described by Hindu devotees as a burden on the physical body. Devotees may choose to perform one of the four *kavadis* while walking a religious procession: 1) they hold a milk pot on top of their head (*paalkudam*); 2) carry a garlanded wooden arch across their shoulders (*paal kavadi*); 3) carry a heavy semicircular metal structure that is attached to their torso via skewers (*spike kavadi*); or 4) pull a chariot that is hooked to the skin on their back (*chariot kavadi*). Only male devotees are allowed to perform the *spike kavadi* and *chariot kavadi*.

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## The Cape Coon Carnival

as seen through the lens of an outsider, or to be more precise, of a white Afrikaans musicologist who used to study the *Markuspassion* of Johann Sebastian Bach

By Paula Fourie\* (Stellenbosch University)



This photo essay consists of twelve photographs documenting the 2016 Cape Coon Carnival, a musical tradition that, perhaps more than any other, reflects South Africa's history of encounter and entanglement

between different races and cultures.<sup>1</sup> The Carnival is an enormously popular event belonging to the Afrikaans-speaking communities of the Cape who

are descended from the early white settlers, the Indigenous Khoisan, and slaves imported mainly from the Indonesian Archipelago—those who were designated as coloured by the apartheid regime.<sup>2</sup> Consisting of troupes of singers and instrumentalists with painted faces and brightly-coloured silk outfits who make music and parade through the streets of Cape Town, the Carnival's roots lie in the early singing traditions of the city's slaves and in blackface minstrelsy imported from the United States in

\*All photography by and property of Paula Fourie ©

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# The Cape Coon Carnival

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the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Every year on 2 January (on what is also called “Second New Year”), the Carnival follows its present-day route, starting in the former District Six, an area that was inhabited mainly by coloured families before it was famously designated by the apartheid government for the use of “whites only,” its inhabitants evicted and its buildings demolished. It then proceeds to the Bo-Kaap, an area historically inhabited by Cape Town’s Muslim population. The day on which slaves were historically given a “holiday” to celebrate the new year, it is now a celebration of identity in the face of that which would deny identity, a day on which members of the Coons—many of whom are both descendants of slaves and victims of the forced removals during apartheid—claim the now-privileged spaces and streets of Cape Town once more. It is a day that was famously described by the late South African musician and Coon coach Taliep Petersen as “onse dag” (Afrikaans for “our day”).

The Cape Coon Carnival is a marginalized cultural manifestation that, together with traditions such as the *Langarm*-bands, the Cape Malay Choirs, and the Christmas Choirs of Cape Town, has historically received minimal attention from South African scholars. In a society such as ours, where institutions of higher learning have for so long positioned themselves as bastions of European civilization in Africa, Eurocentric curriculums and perspectives have thrived in our music departments, creating an environment oblivious to our duty to educate South Africans about South Africa. It is a perspective that we as a country, and as a discipline, cannot afford. Decolonizing ethno/musicology in South Africa means engaging with precisely those musical traditions previously not regarded as valuable or worthy of study. In many cases, this means those traditions historically practiced by coloured or black South Africans and not by the formerly dominant white minority. Moreover, as in the case of the Cape Coon Carnival, it often means those musical traditions that do not easily fit into the accepted narrative of opposition against the apartheid regime.

Most significantly, decolonizing ethno/musicology in South Africa means being aware of the lenses through which we perceive these musical traditions, a reflexive critique vis-à-vis what and

whom we are trying to write about and our own positionality. In this, photography as a medium offers possibilities that could inform our attempts to write it. The photographs in this essay are an attempt to reveal just that—a glimpse of the complex relationship between the research subject and the researcher, without foregrounding the latter at the expense of the former. Some of these photographs capture what is thought to be unobserved moments: here a saxophonist hurries across a field to join his troupe, there a woman has a quiet word with her grandchildren. Yet in others, the photographer is dramatically revealed, whether in the happy performance of a “lieutenant” dancing down the street, or in the stark stare of a “Red Indian” at the end of his march before he gets on a bus to go back to the township, and I get into my car to drive home.

## Endnotes

1. The term “coon” has its origins in nineteenth century United States where it was used as a pejorative reference to African-Americans. Although debates regarding its use are on-going, South Africa’s carnival troupes generally self-employ this term without a negative connotation. I use this term here as an acknowledgment that words can travel and be re-inscribed in new situations, as emphasized by the late South African musician and Coon coach Taliep Petersen in 1994: “Now, now, people don’t ... The Americans come and they don’t want us to use the word ‘Coon’ because it’s derogatory. For the people here, ‘Coon’ is not derogatory, in our sense, for us, the minute you talk ‘Coon’ he sees new year’s day, he sees satin, and the painted ... white around the eyes, black around the rest, the eyes and mouth with circles in white, the rest of the face was in black like the American Minstrel, or, it’s easy to understand, like Al Jolson.”

Taliep Petersen, interview by Denis-Constant Martin, 15 November, 1994.

2. The term “coloured” has since evolved to refer to a diverse group of people whose heritage can best be described as creolized. Although it has outright derogatory connotations elsewhere, in South Africa it has a complex history that has included both its rejection as an apartheid label and its claiming as a self-referential term. I use this term here without any qualifying appendages, both to emphasize individual agency in identity creation and from the perspective that the use of politically correct terminology has the potential to undermine because it strips words of precisely those connotations that, in this specific context, may not be forgotten.

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# The Cape Coon Carnival

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## Marching Orders from Grandma

Three members of the Shoprite Pennsylvanian troupe huddle in the desolate landscape of District Six before their road march. This is the starting point for the Coon Carnival, which will wind its way through central Cape Town and come to an end in Rose Street in the Bo-Kaap.



## At Ease

Two young trumpeters of the Shoprite Pennsylvanians confer before they join their troupe in the march that will take place over several hours. For this year's Coon Carnival, the Pennsylvanians were joined by some 60 other troupes that together comprised more than 30,000 individual performers.

## District Six: A Palimpsest

A saxophonist strides through an empty field in District Six on his way to join the Shoprite Pennsylvanians.

The Muir Street Mosque (Zeenatul Islam Masjid) seen in the background was built in 1938, some thirty years before the area was declared by government decree for the use of "whites only." Together with a handful of other mosques, churches and schools, it is one of few buildings to have escaped the razing of District Six.



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# The Cape Coon Carnival

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## In Command of the Shoprite Pennsylvanians

A “lieutenant” of the Shoprite Pennsylvanians, distinguished here from the rank and file members by his uniform and the rosette on his shoulder, poses for the camera. In a nomenclature that reflects the influence of military marching bands in the development of the Coon Carnival, each troupe has several “lieutenants” who are responsible for assisting their troupe “captain” by taking care of organizational matters and ensuring discipline during the road marches.



## “Dis die Nuwejaar en Ons is Deurmekaar”

Members of the Shoprite Pennsylvanians making their way down Darling Street, District Six. Reflecting a popular song associated with the Carnival, the literal translation of this title is: “It’s the New Year and we are mixed up.” In this context, *deurmekaar*, “mixed up,” captures something of the wild, joyous exuberance of the occasion that dates back to colonial Cape Town when, in an echo of the Saturnalia of the

Greco-Roman world, 2 January was the one day of the year when its slaves were allowed to break the bonds of orderly behavior.



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# The Cape Coon Carnival

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## On the Other Side of the Fence

From the vantage point of his father's shoulders, a young boy watches the Shoprite Pennsylvanians pass. The Coon Carnival is enjoyed by spectators both old and young who line the roughly 1.5-mile route between District Six and the Bo-Kaap, in most cases staying in the same spot for the entire day.

## Camping in District Six

A family escapes the harsh summer sun under their gazebo on a corner in District Six. To secure their spots for a good view, some families even spend the previous night sleeping on their claims.



## Six Hundred Slaves

Spectators moving through the streets of District Six, to get a better view of the Coons, pass a poster protesting the gentrification of Cape Town's historically working class and coloured neighborhoods. Bearing the logo of the estate agency Pam Golding, it reads: "Hand-crafted evictions on Saturday next, on sale, a community of six hundred slaves. Remarkably healthy, recently evicted from Woodstock lock, stock & barrel. The Palms, Woodstock."

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# The Cape Coon Carnival

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## Bo-Kaap Fashion

A spectator with a Gucci hijab stands in Wale Street in the Bo-Kaap. Behind her stand the brightly-coloured houses that have become emblematic of Cape Town's historically Muslim neighborhood. Cape Town has a sizeable Muslim population, many of whom are the descendants of the slaves and political exiles from Southeast Asia who were sent to colonial Cape Town by the Dutch administration.



## A Rich Inheritance

The young and old of the District Six Hanover troupe wait for their bus at the end of the Carnival route. Characteristic of the Coon Carnival is the participation of several generations at the same time. Many of the senior participants have been marching with their troupes since their childhood.

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# The Cape Coon Carnival

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## Little Drummer Boys

The young rhythm section of the Last Tamahawks [*sic*] Apache troupe relaxing with their instruments after having marched for most of the day. Reflecting the US American influence on the Coon Carnival, the figure of the “Red Indian” found its way into its mythology many, many years ago.



## What Now?

A member of the Last Tamahawks [*sic*] Apache troupe after scalping the New Year.





# Decolonizing the Discipline Through Archival Repatriation

an interview with Aaron Fox\*

By Kyle DeCoste (Columbia University)

**Kyle DeCoste:** First of all, thanks for sitting down with me. I was wondering if you could just give a brief overview of the archival repatriation work that you've been doing.



**Aaron Fox:** In 2003, I was put in charge of the Ethnomusicology Center [at Columbia University], the main purpose of which was to curate this archive of recordings that had been purchased from Laura Boulton

and then subsequently added to by Boulton in an acquisitions process in the '60s and '70s. And the first thing I encountered was an email printed out on my predecessor's stack of unanswered mail from a young Navajo Columbia student in the film program named Nanobah Becker saying, "Hey, you know that thing we talked about with my family's recordings? Could we make it happen?" The great-granddaughter of a famous Navajo medicine man was an MFA student in the same building that I'm in, and her great-grandfather had recorded for Laura Boulton in 1933 at the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago along with her grandfather, her mother's father.

I immediately began to look at the Boulton collection and realized it was full of dozens and dozens of tribes' music: Native American, Alaska Native, First Nations Canadian, and Indigenous South American, not to mention traditional and Indigenous music from elsewhere in the world. But I feel an enormous, special responsibility in the North American context because of the relationship between our discipline, ethnomusicology/anthropology, and the history of genocide and colonialism of Native people and our reliance on Native people and knowledge to produce the discipline. So I had all that in me as an affective understanding of what I was doing in the world, and there came this moment of flashing clarity that somebody ought to give all this music back and that somebody had just handed me the obligation to do

that. And so I started to unfold a series of projects beginning with working with Nanobah and the Becker family, and the Ojo Encino chapter of the Navajo Nation, to return the 1933 Navajo recordings, but also to conceptualize what returning recordings would be.

A series of other relationships and fortuitous connections like that unfolded over the subsequent years, including the one that led to my own work in Alaska, which was the result of an Oklahoma PhD student in cultural geography named Chie Sakakibara. And I've been continuing to develop that collection through a community-based process of trying to foster uses of the archive without trying to specify what they are, which is a big principle of my work, which is sort of a little bit Star Trek prime directive-y. But it strikes me that there's a tendency in a lot of repatriation discourse to think about the problems of repatriation on an Indigenous-wide, one-size-fits-all way. And maybe the core discovery of my work with eight or ten different repatriation projects and contexts—maybe a dozen—has been [that] no two [are] alike. These cultures have very different traditional understandings of song ownership, sharing, rights to access, the meaning of giving a song to somebody, and the meaning of returning a song. They share different kinds of repertoires with different functions and histories, and different levels of authorization to give away things. And the communities have different experiences with the outside world, with anthropology, with museums—in every case, a colonial one.

And there's been this parallel motion for me of really wanting to decolonize the discipline at the institutional center, not just out in the world as a field of activist practice motivated by a liberal, heroic narrative of redressing and fixing things, but as seeing us as being on Native land. The first observation you should make around these issues is that every one of us is on unceded Native territory, to some extent. We built our disciplines, institutions, universities, and lives on this. But much deeper than that, it's been

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# Decolonizing the Discipline Through Archival Repatriation

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about relentless advocating for the careers of certain people, and a relentless argument that research needs to be conceptualized as—and the word everybody uses, and I use it too, is—activist, because applied maintains a distinction between theory and practice that activist erases. But it's also a romantic word. I just prefer “useful,” a kind of humbler word, where any intellectual project should have at least some kind of political utility/social utility, that you can conceptualize as underlying even the most abstract theoretical problematic. And I've been trying to push the idea that that is not the antithesis of scholarship; it's actually the next evolution of scholarship in the humanities and especially to broaden out. And if the humanities don't decolonize, the humanities become certainly what they are already sometimes seen to be—certainly in music—which is archives themselves, repositories of white privilege. At some point a reckoning with utility and the question of who pays for our research is really necessary, which is why the rest of my intellectual agenda these days is a historicization of the field around the question of who paid for it and why, which doesn't exempt our present moment from that critique at all.

**KD:** And so jumping ahead to our present moment, what are some things that students can think about in doing field recordings and collecting things (because we're building archives)?

**AF:** It's easy to throw hand grenades at anthropology from fifty years ago or a hundred years ago and call it racist and colonialist and identify grotesque failures of our contemporary ethical and moral standards, and even grotesque failures of *those* people's contemporary moral standards. These guys *were* aware of doing bad things—they just thought they'd get away with it. It's not just that they were just

dupes and naïve in a structural racist context, they also made decisions consciously that were cynical even with respect to the discourse of ethics of their time. But even so, you get closer and closer to the present and it gets really worrying when you realize that there isn't an escape hatch from this. We're built on a structural racism. We're built on a foundation of colonial, and genocidal, and enslaving practice. The walls, the buildings got paid for, the materials got built by slaves in some cases. You know, Georgetown is sort of in the news, but there isn't a two-hundred- or three-hundred-year-old institutional building in the United States that doesn't have materials that were somehow passed through a slave labor system. And so any illusion that critique produces liberty without reforming the practice that generates the critique, we're on to that. It's not like we're not there.

The first and most important thing to do is to diversify the participation in that critique, and that is the most important challenge for this generation. And so the main thing I would say is don't treat the

... the main thing I would say is don't treat the people you work with in the field as “other” to you. Treat them as your *collaborators* is my word of choice; *friends* is my other word of choice.

people you work with in the field as “other” to you. Treat them as your *collaborators* is my word of choice; *friends* is my other word of choice. Befriend your fieldwork, which probably doesn't mean always saying nice things about your fieldwork or the people you work with. In fact, the obligation that rises with personal commitment is to be honestly critical because you're

in a privileged position to actually do something with a critique. So a lot of people have a contradiction about this, especially in their first major field project: “How can I write critically about people that have welcomed me into their world?” And the point is to recognize their agency in welcoming you isn't naïve.<sup>1</sup> Almost always, if we work in the developing world, or Third World, or Indigenous contexts, we are welcomed in as representations of hegemonic power

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# Decolonizing the Discipline Through Archival Repatriation

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in part with the expectation that, like Laura Boulton, we can move the needle on that power from our position and can be a valuable conduit for bringing diverse voices to the table.

So that is, for me, the highest mandate: to produce a diverse discipline at every level, from undergraduate to graduate education to hiring for the professoriate, but also the way we don't boundarize our fieldwork and our real lives. So you'll notice that the guests at the [Ethnomusicology] Center include lots of Indigenous activists and musicians who are people that I know not from academia, but I want them in the academic conversation, partly because it benefits me obviously on some level, but also because that, to me, is the model of what needs to be transformed at the moment. And it's effectively being transformed, but I don't want to rest on that because I think that beyond that, we have a much harder step to move past a kind of tokenistic representation to say, "Well, how would it be to represent the *interests* of Indigenous people at a *structural* level?" And that's not only a project-by-project consideration, but it's a paradigm shift question for a generation of scholars.

I will say, for ethnomusicologists, that I took five years off from visiting the SEM meetings on purpose and started going back three years ago. [The meeting in Austin] was spectacular from my point of view. It was the best SEM I had ever been to. I was totally amazed and, having the five-year window, I saw the generational turnover differently than seeing it incrementally year-by-year. And I saw a woman president, a Native American keynote speaker, Black Lives Matter, and repatriation. And on every panel, I saw much more gender diversity, sexual diversity, and race diversity than I had ever seen at an SEM meeting, and a much more critical and activist kind of voicing, especially from younger scholars of the field, which was super heartening, except we were in a hotel that cost \$500/night to stay at and

was surrounded by an army of homeless people wandering the streets of the fabulously wealthy and income-unequal city in which we were meeting. And so I think there's always a point where you have to not get comfortable with your critique and you can say, "Yes, it's great that the SEM is so much more diverse and outward-facing and political than it used to be in ways that I didn't expect to see. Now if we can just change the name of the field." You know, we went from one woman president to another, everything about it. We had a Native American song at the opening of the Seeger lecture. It didn't feel as

Who's not going to agree with you? Bring them in. Talk to them. Find that person in the field who doesn't think you should be recording their songs and don't record them and go talk to them.

tokenistic as prior stuff like that felt. It felt like, *structurally*, something had [changed] in the generational shift of the field. But there's a way in which quickly, activism becomes a kind of institutionalized careerist "traditional scholarship"—the phrase I hate—of its own. And I resist that by always trying to import the critical voice into the conversation somehow. Who's

not going to agree with you? Bring them in. Talk to them. Find that person in the field who doesn't think you should be recording their songs and don't record them and go talk to them.

## Endnote

1. Aaron credits Robin Gray, a Ts'msyen anthropologist and President's Postdoctoral Fellow in the Department of History at the University of California, Santa Cruz, for influencing his thinking on this point.

\*This interview has been edited and condensed, and I take full responsibility for any careless omissions. For an excellent supplementary reading to this interview, see Fox, Aaron. 2014. "Repatriation as Reanimation Through Reciprocity." In *The Cambridge History of World Music*, edited by Philip V. Bohlman. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.



# "Be a Good Girl"

cover image

By Tania Willard (Secwepemc Nation)

"Be a Good Girl" (2006 woodcut print) is a reflection on the gendered work expectations and training of women in the 1950s. I have explored this topic by looking at Indian residential schools, and the ways in which young Native women were trained in an effort to transform them into good working-class wives and workers. The Indian residential school system had a half-day labour program for girls, which was abolished in 1952 out of concern that children were not receiving an education, but were only serving the financial needs of the schools. Residential schools forbade Native children from speaking their languages or practicing their culture in an attempt to mold them, for their "salvation," into productive members of white, capitalist society. The residential schools were part of a dark history of racism and genocide in Canada and continue to have negative effects. This sort of gendered work training, however, was not reserved for the assimilation of Natives; training schools like the Ontario Training School for Girls rehabilitated young women with "loose" morals and other traits that were not tolerated in the '50s. Both non-Native, working class and Native girls attended these training schools. This piece is about the conflicts, spiritual paradoxes, and societal expectations of young women in the '50s.

*Tania Willard, Secwepemc Nation, is an artist and designer based in Secwepemcuncw (near Chase, BC). Through her art and design she hopes to communicate the stories and voices we are unable to hear—the voices that are missing and erased from our histories and realities. You can learn more about Tania and her work on her website: <http://www.taniawillard.ca/>.*

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# Reading, Decolonizing

some resources from many perspectives

By Hannah Adamy (University of California, Davis)

Calls for decolonization have increased in volume since Frantz Fanon, Edward Said, Gayatri Spivak, and other founding scholars in the postcolonial moment began publishing, protesting, and performing. Decolonizing ethnomusicology is now a full-blown project, the most important development of which is considering collaborators as fellow intellectuals. In other words, critical engagement and activist scholarship is no longer optional. As scholars, we must bring questions of power and privilege to the forefront of the discipline and, more generally, to all interdisciplinary studies in the humanities. Fundamentally, decolonizing ethnomusicology means uniting scholarship and activism, theory and methodology, performance and protest. How, then, should we go about being activist-scholars? What is decolonized scholarship?

A decolonized approach to ethnomusicology involves reflecting on the philosophies and methodologies that constitute the discipline. Therefore, I have looked to the related disciplines of anthropology, performance studies, gender studies, black/Africana studies, Indigenous studies, and Latina/o studies to compile this bibliography. Many of these texts are edited volumes and, thus, inherently multi-vocal, and most are works by Indigenous scholars. These twenty-five written works continue decolonization conversations and propose ways in which scholars must take action. I invite you to use this list as both an introduction and an inspiration for your own praxes.

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Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, Noelani, Ikaika Hussey, and Erin Kahunawaika'ala Wright. 2014. *A Nation Rising: Hawaiian Movements for Life, Land, and Sovereignty*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

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# Reading, Decolonizing

... continued

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- Sendejo, Brenda, and Tori Vasquez. 2016. "Unboxing the Buried Seeds of My Belonging: Latina/o History, Decolonized Pedagogies and the Politics of Inclusion." *American Anthropological Association*, September 15. Accessed October 10, 2016. <http://www.anthropology-news.org/index.php/2016/09/15/unboxing-the-buried-seeds-of-my-belonging/>.
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- Venkateswar, Sita, and Emma Hughes, eds. 2011. *The Politics of Indigeneity: Dialogues and Reflections on Indigenous Activism*. London: Zed Books.
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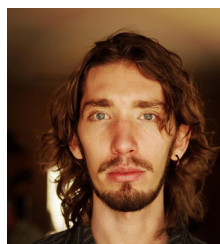
## Extended Resource Lists

Did we miss something? Contact us with your comments and suggestions at [semstudentnews@gmail.com](mailto:semstudentnews@gmail.com). We will be happy to add citations and resources to the online version of our [Reading, Decolonizing](#) resource list.

Also, check out our past extended resource lists on SEM's website. These include:

- [Navigating the Job Market](#)
- [Music and Diaspora](#)
- [Music, Medicine, Health, and Cognition](#)

# SEM {STUDENTNEWS}



## **Davin Rosenberg, editor & design/layout**

Davin is a PhD student in ethnomusicology at University of California, Davis. His research focuses on North American flamenco and explores musicking and dancing in the (re) construction of time, space, and (sense of) place; groove and performance temporalities; kinesthetic and sonesthetic impacts of performance; and transnational musicocultural flows and interrelationships. His previous work discusses flamenco performance, instruction, and tradition in Phoenix, Arizona. Davin is also an instrument repair technician and plays trumpet and flamenco guitar.



## **Eugenia Siegel Conte, assistant editor**

Eugenia is a PhD student in Ethnomusicology at the University of California, Santa Barbara. She recently completed her MA in Ethnomusicology at Wesleyan University, researching identity in choral music and performance in Oahu, Hawai'i. Previously, she earned an MA in Music Research at Truman State University, focusing on gender and sexuality in Benjamin Britten's opera *The Turn of the Screw*. She is currently interested in film and television music, world choral traditions, and voice studies.



## **Heather Strohschein, copy editor**

Heather is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa. She holds a BA in world music and an MA in ethnomusicology from Bowling Green State University. Her dissertation research focuses on Javanese gamelan use outside of Indonesia as well as the performance of affinity and community. Heather also serves as a co-editor/co-founder of the [\*SEM Student Union blog\*](#) and currently teaches online world music courses at the University of Hawai'i West O'ahu.



## **Ana-Maria Alarcón-Jiménez, sem student union liaison**

Ana-Maria currently works as assistant researcher and is a doctoral student at the Universidade Nova de Lisboa. She has researched and studied at the Graduate Center of the City of New York (CUNY), the University of California in San Diego, the University of Arkansas, and the National University of Colombia, among others. She has been awarded full scholarships by all the above mentioned institutions. Ana-Maria is Vice Chair of the Society for Ethnomusicology Student Union and a contributor to the [\*SEM Student Union Blog\*](#).



## **Sara Hong-Yeung Pun, thoughts from the field columnist**

Sara Pun is a PhD student at Memorial University of Newfoundland as well as an accredited music therapist and music educator. Sara believes in the transformative effects of music and is an advocate for using music for positive social change. She loves piano, Japanese taiko, Indonesian gamelan, reading, writing, and hiking. Sara is passionate about community music and is an adventure junkie. You can learn more about her at: [www.sworldmusic.com](http://www.sworldmusic.com).



# SEM {STUDENTNEWS}



## **Kyle DeCoste, contributor**

Kyle DeCoste is a PhD student in ethnomusicology at Columbia University. He holds a BA in music and arts administration from Bishop's University (2012) and an MA in musicology from Tulane University (2015). In his master's thesis, he applied a black feminist theoretical lens to brass band performance in New Orleans.



## **Simran Singh, contributor**

Simran Singh is a Reid scholar and recipient of the Overseas Research Award at Royal Holloway, University of London. Her doctoral research explores hiphop and political economy, focusing on Uganda. She holds an MA with distinction in Media and International Development from the University in East Anglia, and has served as Visiting Tutor in the departments of Music, and Politics and International Relations, following a seven-year career as Creative Director of a branding firm in India.



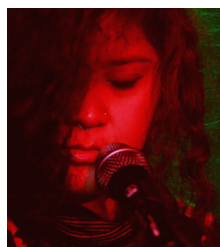
## **Brendan Kibbee, contributor**

Brendan Kibbee is a PhD candidate in ethnomusicology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. He is currently conducting fieldwork for his dissertation, "Counterpublics and Street Assemblies in Postcolonial Dakar," focused on the intersection of music, associational life, politics, and public space in a popular quarter of Dakar, Senegal. Brendan plays Senegalese percussion at the Alvin Ailey Extension, and is also a jazz pianist. He has taught at John Jay College and City College, CUNY.



## **Hannah Adamy, researcher**

Hannah Adamy is a second-year PhD student in Ethnomusicology at the University of California, Davis. She received her MA in Performance Studies from Texas A&M University, where she studied processes of heteronormativity in Euro-classical vocal pedagogy. Her current research focuses on vocal production as praxis in speaking back to violence. She also composes music for various community theaters in New Jersey.



## **Adriana Martínez Falcón, social media manager**

Adriana is a Mexican Ethnomusicologist. She is an invited lecturer at the Modern Languages Department of the Hong Kong University, where she collaborates with Professor Mercedes Vazquez on the Latin American Music course. Her research focuses on Chinese cultural studies, and the study of ritual and identity in Chinese lion dance. She's currently an active performer of electronic music in Asia.