

## (22 July 2023) White Settler Anxiety

<https://antonia.substack.com/p/white-settler-anxiety>

Reading this most recent "Walking Composition" by Montana writer/activist Antonia Malchik as the clouds and thunder pass by without leaving a drop on this day of continuing record heat and humidity, got me thinking how tired I am of hearing complaints about loss of water rights, government over-reach and outsider (read Bisbee) voters, especially when those complaints are accompanied by pedigrees implying that the complainers are due some special (not to say privileged) consideration because their families have been farming and ranching here for three or more generations.

Which is to say, it was their forebears who helped steal the land from the indigenous people and began the process of environmental desecration the watershed has suffered ever since, beginning with deforestation to fuel the mines and desertification to feed the cattle and leading to today's routine poisoning of the land with pesticides and depletion of the aquifer to grow vast farm and ranch monocultures of stockfeed.

Which is not to deny that some of these folks are really good people, solid, true-blue in the way we used to think of the almost mythical yeoman American stock, carrying on the Jeffersonian agrarian ideal. As I've written elsewhere, you couldn't ask for better neighbors (though it still behooves greenhorns to beware of the infamous cowboy courtesy).

We all like to take pride in our ancestry, in our heritage; and we all have to make a living, to have a place to live. But let's not forget that the land theft, cultural decimation and genocide of those pioneers, the discovery doctrine philosophy and attitude of those ancestors, is at the root of the legacy we have inherited, that the white settler mentality is not exactly absent from the dreams and drives of those living here today, whether on inherited or newly-acquired property.

How many Indigenous are in the confabs and workshops and behind the scenes meetings where the fate of our aquifer is being decided? How many people are in the public hearings and courtrooms speaking not in terms of their own self-interest but for the environment itself, the natural flora and fauna, the ecosystems? How many in the discussions about drought and climate change are concerned less with protecting income and investment and high-production acquisitive economics than with protecting the ecological basis of human economy?

While our desert cities dry up and implode like those of the ancient civilizations (self-destroyed by ecological ignorance and greed), how many of us are really willing to consider what serious-minded people all over the world are considering in these early stages of climate catastrophe: that recourse to non-industrial and regenerative agriculture, low-water crops and the like are not enough but that, just we need to cut down on the amount of water being pumped, so too do we need significant degrowth overall in the near future: less land grazed and cultivated, fewer houses and fewer mouths to feed.

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*"The ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction...between true and false no longer exist."*

*- Hannah Arendt*

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