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CURRENTS: AN ANTHROPOLOGY OF INHUMANITY IN XINJIANG: EVIDENCE, COMPARISON, RHETORIC AND REFLECTIONS

What does genocide feel like? An autoethnography of visual affect

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This article reflects on relations between individual and cultural experience to illuminate how anthropologists and political scientists approach Uyghur narratives of genocide. Uyghur perspectives are often overlooked in global media coverage that represents them through narratives of China's "restive region" or Western sanctions. The article analyzes my own role in analyzing experiences of violence in a public setting, the Uyghur Tribunal, committed to assessing the truth of Uyghur claims. The method is a reluctant autoethnography, in between Leon Anderson's "analytic autoethnography" in which researchers are full members in a group setting committed to understanding a phenomenon, and Carolyn Ellis's "heartful autoethnography," which crafts evocative stories that create reality. The analysis of visual affect at the Uyghur Tribunal builds on Brian Massumi's approach, which considers that researchers must be open to affecting and being affected by the world to understand it or to communicate the meaning of their findings, particularly in cases of genocide.

Keywords: visual methods, autoethnography, affect, China, Uyghurs, genocide

Ethnographic work in Xinjiang *must* lack thick description. The dangers to people we work with on the ground are multiple and potentially fatal (Smith 2006). The lack of ethnographic subtlety in much literature on identities in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, therefore, reflects these brute realities of ethnically targeted state violence. One ethnographer confided, "I arrived in Xinjiang thinking about multiplicity and subject positions but realized, there really are bad guys and good guys." For my own part, living in Ürümchi in the aftermath of the 2009 violence, I was given "informed consent" to reveal details about people's lives that would have enabled intellectually nuanced analysis and helped write a thrilling read for popular audiences. However, these fieldwork experiences showed me how research ethics have traditionally been designed without consideration for protection of targeted ethnic groups in authoritarian states. This essay argues for the intellectual and political necessity to *feel* those perspectives to the extent we can, to understand those experiences and to conceptualize the mutual interactions between human relationships and our own analytical lens.

Researchers in Xinjiang must stop and think beyond university regulations and legal obligations about the ethics of fieldwork and human relationships, often omitting swathes of ethnographic detail that would illuminate people's lives and emotions to avoid revealing identities and placing their lives at risk. For example, the party-state's "75 signs of religious extremism"[1] is a broad code of conduct for cadres on arbitrary selection of Uyghurs for internment in camps. Its first sign lists advocating the separateness of Xinjiang, which includes everyday Uyghur identification as an Islamic or Turkic group, alongside advocating for independence or Sharia law (Tobin 2020: 302). The "banality of evil" is not something researchers simply observe (Arendt 2006), rather they practice it when justifying ethical decisions regarding conduct in human relationships, based solely on bureaucratic procedure or

1. See Xinjiang Documentation Project. 2020. "Identifying religious extremism." https://xinjiang.sppga.ubc.ca/chinese-sources/online-sources/identifying-religious-extremism/. Accessed December 20, 2021.

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desires for thick description. Ethnographers must engage with textured details and the multiplicity of identities and personal relationships Uyghurs discuss and practice in private. However, their description must be thinner than desired for the sake of people's safety and their own ethical integrity, because publishing those details reveals participants' identities and could result in internment or death.

When I began researching Uyghur identities in 2006, there was little media interest or engagement from mainstream China Studies. Senior figures in the discipline told me, "You will never get a job," and "Uyghurs can't tell you anything about Chinese nation-building." However, Uyghur claims of genocide and increasing global interest in the region have now converged creating an appropriate juncture to reflect broadly on the importance and limitations of ethnographic methods to interpreting the intent and impact of state violence. Broader audiences now *watch* and *feel* snapshots of Uyghur lives in media representations and first-hand diaspora accounts, which calculate the risks to their own lives and provide thick description. It is, therefore, an important juncture for anthropologists and social scientists to reflect on the relations between global visual affect and ethics when conducting research with Uyghurs. We must reflect on how our own political and identity lenses shape the pictures we paint and the stories we tell as privileged producers of knowledge.

Many affects that ethnographers experience privately when conducting fieldwork in Xinjiang were visually replicated at the 2021 Uyghur Tribunal for global, public audiences.[2] Viewers could engage with the emotions experienced and relationships created when one chooses to listen to someone communicating personal suffering and narrating the social and political dimensions of that suffering. These are uncomfortable yet familiar affects which created a sense of painful déjà vu for researchers whose lives and work were transformed by looking into the eyes of close friends explaining "we are dying," "they think we are all terrorists," or "I don't know what happened to my family." However, unlike sensitive research and politicized life in Xinjiang, the proceedings of the Uyghur Tribunal were entirely public. Global audiences could choose to watch and experience these affects and enter relationships with thick Uyghur descriptions of their lives that are now globally accessible, visually affective records.

2. Uyghur Tribunal 2021. https://uyghurtribunal.com. Accessed December 20, 2021.

Emotions underpin affect and how it is experienced by ethnographers. Emotions shape what researchers choose to look for, what they see, and how they practice ethics. Emotions, like visuals, frame affects on our thought and identities. Researchers are therefore ethically required to understand how their own framing shapes their understanding and experience of the emotional framings of others. The "emotional turn" in political science drew from social anthropology, showing how emotions, including fear and love, underpin both "objective" theory and the subject matter it theorizes, mediated by social traditions as much as individual experience (Hutchison and Bleiker 2017; Ling 2014).

The emotional turn's related visual turn reflects William Callahan's core thesis in *Sensible politics*, that "people actively visualise the world they want to live" and "societies they don't want to see and *feel*" (Callahan 2020: 2). Visuals, like emotions, do not simply "mirror" the world but are "world-making," constructed from the social world that lies behind their production and in turn, constructing the world (Mitchell 2005). This "world-making" component means researchers must be emotionally and visually literate to understand their own constructions of the world through feeling and writing. Walter Benjamin's "The work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction" (2019) warned that the aestheticization of politics evokes mass sentiments, including perceived binaries between uncontrollable emotions and calculative rationality, and results in fascism and war. For this reason, scholars (and societies) need what Callahan termed "visual literacy," or Gillian Rose a "visibility strategy," to understand how pictures frame reality and examine visuals' discursive and emotive links with power and social context (Bleiker 2018; Callahan 2020: 27–28; Rose 2016: 2).

Identities, like images, are artifacts of continual processes of emotionally driven reproduction that performatively constitute themselves and frame reality. Their fields are now global, overriding previous boundaries between East and West and between "participant and observer" (Campbell 2003: 57–59). The multisensory dimensions of these fields mean researchers must consider their own roles as observers, participants, and targets, while researching in halls of power or when scribbling "notes in a brothel, a kitchen, or latrine" (Enloe 2011: 447). This requires researchers to observe and critique themselves as they watch, feel, and participate in affective human relations that change their identities. The desire for reproduction of a consistent and integral self is termed ontological security in political science (Steele 2007). Ontological security

can be narrowly construed as nationally bounded identity maintenance but can also be productive of globalized identities or simply the desire for the world to be comprehensible or consistently ordered. Researchers, therefore, must reflect on their own insecurities and *feel* those of Uyghurs to ensure they do not impose their own ontological and emotional insecurities when analyzing the narratives and identity practices of others.

The method here is a reluctant autoethnography. It sits in between Leon Anderson's (2006) "analytic autoethnography" in which the researcher is a full member in a group or setting committed to broader understanding of a phenomenon, and what Carolyn Ellis (1999) termed "heartful ethnography," to craft evocative stories that create reality. Reluctant autoethnography seeks to transcend one's own lens through human relationships but accepts its impossibility. This approach builds on Brian Massumi's (2015) thinking on affect, specifically that researchers must be open to affecting and being affected by the world if they wish to encounter and understand it. This form of affective-reflexive autoethnography requires reflection on one's own lens, including identity and emotions, in relations with others whose lives can only be understood by attempting to experience the emotional and social urgency in the sense of loss, trauma, and need for human connection, which are evoked by genocide.

Ethnographers are not the story but must reluctantly accept that we play roles in settings committed to narrating truths that people continue to choose not to hear and should conceptualize or reflect on that role to explore how truth is made. I reflect on "the relationship among self and culture, individual and collective experience" (Holman Jones 2007), but only to the extent that it offers intellectual transparency and reflection on how analysis of specific experiences is mediated through our own role and lens. Uyghurs have been silenced in popular, reductionist framings of global politics, reducing them to plot devices in narcissistic geopolitical fantasies, simultaneously Eurocentric and Sinocentric, as a "restive region" for China or sanctions from "the West." The story ought to be the suffering of peoples invisibilized by converging Sinocentric and Eurocentric ontological security narratives. Uyghurs are implicitly considered a nonpeople or as exotic, non-Western objects of study in ethnographic research that reflects unattainable desires for ontological consistency in a changing world. Feeling genocide is essential to understanding why so many Uyghurs choose to risk their families' lives by sharing their identities with the world. Connecting with those feelings shows how violence is not inherently physical and enables researchers to deconstruct how their own lens shapes those connections. Researchers choose to look away from genocide not because of the intolerable harm to others but because it challenges their own identity and understanding of the world.

The Uyghur tribunal

The pictures and framings experienced and analyzed in this essay speak to the power and anxieties of both the Chinese party-state and democratic states about their own powerlessness. Uyghurs narrate themselves as powerless yet resilient in facing genocide by a powerful state. Uyghurs have actively worked to be included in the picture frame by participating in global debates and visual fields about their own lives and felt experiences of colonialism as Central Asian Turkic-speaking Muslims in China. Under Xi Jinping's rule, up to three million Uyghurs and Kazakhs have been extralegally detained (Batke 2019), subjected to invasive surveillance (Byler 2021), sexual violence (Human Rights Watch 2021), child separation (Amnesty International 2020), and psychological trauma (DPA International 2019), while networks of forced labor (Murphy 2021), hi-tech surveillance systems (Human Rights Watch 2019), and checkpoints and interpersonal monitoring (ASPI 2019) structure the daily lives of those outside the camps. The growing material power of the party-state is matched with identity anxiety. China stands accused of state violence tantamount to crimes against humanity and genocide, which the party-state's propaganda outlets, such as the *Global Times*, considers Western problems and "entirely foreign to Chinese" (Liu, Fan, and Xie 2021).

Claims of genocide come, firstly, from Uyghur and Kazakh citizens of the PRC. Many Uyghurs testified, using the English language, on first-hand experiences of torture and sexual violence at the London-based Uyghur Tribunal led by Sir Geoffrey Nice QC.[3] Secondly, they emerge from a consensus of scholars with long-term fieldwork experience in the region, having witnessed racism and state violence for decades. Scholars have analyzed long-term Uyghur and Kazakh experiences of "assimilation," targeting of Turkic and Islamic identities, and policy debates on methods of assimilation.[4] We must now explain

3. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Statements." https://uyghurtribunal.com/statements/. Accessed December 20, 2021.

4. These topics are not new and it has been frustrating to have to repeat older peer-reviewed research findings for

Figure 1: The report's authors (David Tobin, Laura Murphy, Rian Thum, Rachel Harris, and Jo Smith Finley) presenting at the Uyghur Tribunal.

those findings and established but overlooked knowledge from the literature to global audiences unfamiliar with or even disinterested in the case. Since 1949, scholars and policymakers in the PRC have debated how to solve the "ethnic problem" of non-Chinese identities, seen as pivotal to China's "great revival" (Callahan 2010; Leibold 2013), yet these debates are usually sidestepped by mainstream observers abroad and in Beijing, nearly two thousand miles from Ürümchi.

I attended all three hearings of the Uyghur Tribunal, presenting a coauthored report with the United Kingdom's leading experts on the region (Tobin et al. 2021; see Figure 1). The Uyghur Tribunal assessed evidence for Uyghur claims because there is no mechanism for the International Court of Justice or International Criminal Court to hear them without consent of the accused, the party-state. Few China experts risk career progress by conducting research in Xinjiang and no governments were willing to share evidence with the tribunal. However, all witness testimony and expert evidence is publicly available. Our full presentation is online, focusing on issues raised in Uyghur diaspora interviews: forced labor, child separation and coercive birth controls, sexual violence, and repression of religion and cultural practices.[5] Our report concluded that China's party-state coordinates systematic, interconnected practices of ethnically targeted violence, preventing intergenerational transmission of Uyghur identities. We observed, participated, and were targeted (by Twitter users and paid Party trolls) in a visual spectacle, observing while being observed, and taking notes while being noted.

I had never met Nyrola Elimä before interviewing her for the report about her missing family members. This was an unfamiliar experience because in Xinjiang, trust must be built for a long time before Uyghurs feel safe enough to consent to an interview. However, our methods must change with the world. Members of the Uyghur diaspora choose to risk their own lives and their families by publicly speaking on the emergence of mass internment camps in 2017. When I talked with Nyrola, I was reminded of the past and so many friends who told me, "we are dying," or "they think we are all terrorists," looking into my eyes and asking, "can you help us?," or "will you tell the world?" The university ethics bureaucracy does not prepare a researcher with the self-awareness or knowledge of global politics to understand power and ethics in these relationships. My own ethics tells me to explain I will almost certainly not be able to help you, but I will write about the truth. Nyrola was not so naïve to expect this of ethnographers. Nevertheless, I could see and feel my own self-reflections in her sad eyes that I could sense wanted to tell many stories, reminding me of the weight of responsibility to attempt to communicate her real experiences above all else.

disengaged audiences. See, for example, Tobin 2011, 2015a, 2015b.

5. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Live hearing—5th June 2021." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AWCwLvUIV0g. Accessed December 20, 2021.

Figure 2: Nyrola Elimä testifies.

In Nyrola Elimä's words, "while the world debates a word, we are dying."[6] Nyrola referred to the *Economist*'s (2021) anonymous intervention ("genocide is the wrong word"), that without a single reference defies the vast work of genocide theorists who do not consider massacres or physical annihilation essential to the destruction of a people (Card 2003; Hinton 2012; Straus 2007). Hearing those words shaped my research methods, realizing that even Uyghurs who have no desire to be theorists use more sophisticated theory to understand their daily lives than most writers because they *feel* genocide. Unlike the *Economist*, Nyrola bravely testified in public[7] to her family's arbitrary detainment, including Mahire Yaqup,[8] who looked "like skin stretched on a skeleton" when they last spoke in 2018 (Figure 2). Without official verdict and only words of pressured low-level officials to understand their family's breakup, the most notable "crime" heard was wearing a headscarf on holiday in Malaysia. Nyrola told the panel, "I take a lot of risks to be here . . . the Chinese government can take my parents . . . I am scared. I can feel the threat closer and closer." Most witnesses politely waited to be dismissed by the Tribunal's authoritative legal experts. When Nyrola asked, "can I leave now?," it felt like she was taking charge of global narratives and Uyghurs were finally being heard on their own terms. Our research methods and culturally obscure legal processes were being respectfully observed and reoriented by those whom we observe.

We chose not to conceptualize the violence that Uyghurs experience in our report. We have all been affected by experiencing feelings when friends and loved ones look you in the eye to tell you they are suffering deeply but the world is indifferent. There are times to place that suffering in broader analytical context and there are times when it must speak for itself to affect people prior to attempting to understand or analyze why or how. However, an audience only hears these words if they listen. The audience must be willing to be affected and to change by entering relationships with speakers who challenge their understanding of the world, often by highlighting the listener's role in enabling genocides through silence, denial, consumption patterns, or discriminatory language. Most witnesses speak out in hope of seeing family after the party-state severed communications with the outside world and are perplexed why so few are moved by these experiences. When I asked Jevlan Shirmemmet what he thought about repeated targeting of his family, he made his feelings clear and simply explained, "I just want to speak to my mother,"[9] Suriye Tursun.[10]

6. Interview with Nyrola Elimä, May 2021.

7. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Live hearing—7th June 2021." https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aI-wr9TtYo. Accessed December 20, 2021.

8. See Xinjiang Victims Database 2019, "Mahire Yaqup." https://shahit.biz/eng/viewentry.php?entryno=5417. Accessed December 20, 2021.

9. Interview with Jevlan Shirmemmet, April 2021.

10. See Xinjiang Victims Database 2018, "Suriye Tursun." https://shahit.biz/eng/viewentry.php?entryno=7239. Accessed December 21, 2021.

What does genocide feel like?

Law is clinical yet politics is sensual and visceral. Words like genocide and peace, terrorist and human, affect us because they are intimately linked to emotions: anger, safety, love, and hate. Nobody desires to know how genocide *feels* but those who do, describe it as everyday life, inseparable from rational knowledge or sensual experience. The tribunal's procedure of fact collection required legal counsel and expert panelists to ask witnesses clinical quantification and verification questions, "how many people experienced . . . ," "how do you know . . . ," and "why did you feel that . . . ," when discussing torture, gang rape, and intent to "humiliate me" and "destroy us." It was necessary but felt disconcerting. Witnesses' knowledge drew from their sensual experiences of violence and feeling genocide as a lived experience, not from analyzing documents and extrapolating statistics.

Habibulla Achad, disconnected from family since 2017, was asked to quantify child-separation practices, and responded, "I wished . . . everyone would die . . . then I would be in peace."[11] When asked how witnesses knew cellmates were taken to be gang-raped after dark, Qelbinur Sidik could "hear the screams" and others "could see in their faces."[12] Zumret Dawut, said "it is very obvious" because she could "see the guilt" and "we could sense when they were taken and wouldn't come back," referring to young women taken to be gang-raped by camp guards before being tortured to death.[13] The witnesses described a society they do not want to sense or feel but needed the audience to feel to be able to understand why the harm they experience is physically, socially, and ethically intolerable. The witnesses' knowledge of why and how derived from their immediate senses in threatening situations of survival, not conceptualizations of those experiences, or even language. They translated first-hand sensual knowledge into mutually intelligible language for legal experts and global audiences, to help them begin to understand those experiences.

Asked to describe torture techniques, former camp detainees discussed "extremely smelly" water on their immersed bodies. Omir Bekali explained, "you stop to think, are they human?," while hanging upside down and tortured with thin wire.[14] In explanations of symptoms after taking forced mystery medications, many said, "it is difficult to express in words," "after a while, we didn't feel anything," and "you just feel, how does this day pass?" The Tribunal fulfilled persistent fact-checking duties with technical questions because there are few alternative methods to assess the facts when enough people choose to look away through silence or denial.

Affects are mediated by our own lens. People experience different emotions in the same situations. However, I still could not help but feel that if more people were willing to look into Qelbinur's eyes and think "how does she feel?" or "how would I feel if this was my friend?," the Tribunal would be unnecessary. Our own biases towards the written word and the authority of the state to define truth were reflected when Qelbinur felt compelled to hold up official documents to prove her experiences of suffering, while Omir held a visual example of the cell in which he was tortured to capture our imagination (Figures 3 and 4). We should all feel ashamed that people who experience torture must refer to written government documents in public to appeal to our own indifference towards human relationships. Qelbinur and Omir, like other humans who experience torture, should be believed and their lives should never be dismissed as anecdotal. Social scientists and international lawyers must grapple with this failure in self-understanding and in method that hinders our knowledge of genocides until they are subjects for historians, rendering prevention impossible.

If we think of evil as Claudia Card (2010) describes it, "foreseeable intolerable harms produced by inexcusable wrongs," then the Tribunal heard much evil for evil's sake, committed by torturers and psychopaths without demonstrable purpose. However, as Eugen Kogon (2006) discussed in the *The theory and practice of hell*, the Nazis constructed a totalitarian society based not on mobilization of psychopaths and perverts, but on the principle that

11. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Statement -Habibulla Achad." https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/06-1150-JUN-21-UTFW-060-Habibulla-Achad-English.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2021.

12. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Statement - Qelbinur Sidik." https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/04-0930-JUN-21-UTFW-005-Qelbinur-Sidik-English-1.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2021.

13. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Statement -Zumret Dawut." https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/04-0930-JUN-21-UTFW-005-Qelbinur-Sidik-English-1.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2021.

14. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Statement—Omir Bekali." https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/04-1020-JUN-21-UTFW-018-Omir-Bekali-English.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2021.

Figures 3 and 4: Qelbinur Sidik and Omir Bekali hold official documents and visuals to testify lived experiences.

they could rely on the civility of the German middle classes to conform to social norms over rebellion, even amidst the most profound evil. Most intolerable harm stems from this willful ignorance and self-denial. However, genocide and denial today are global affective fields that performatively constitute all identities, overriding and blurring boundaries between participants, observers, and targets. Whether we choose to look or to look away, we are all affected by and acting on genocides. When a social scientist looks away, they are so deeply affected that they choose to filter out information they deem necessary to their own professional development. When they choose to look, it becomes obvious that no ethnographic method can address the intent, meaning, or impact of genocide without implicit reference to our own identities, desires, and feelings towards those who viscerally experience its violence. As I scribbled my notes in a hall of power about lives in mass internment camps, I knew I was neither participant nor observer. I remembered the naïve feelings of ontological security as a child when I was told by Holocaust survivors, "never again."

Conclusions? The global multisensory field of genocide

People affected by genocide feel they must publicly relive traumatic experiences for global audiences so their lives can be recognized as reality. Abduweli Ayup simply referred to his written testimony, because "I don't want to cry."[15] Gulbahar Haitiwaji explained, "I have

15. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Abduweli Ayup—Full Statement." https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/04-1710-JUN-21-UTFW-013-Abduweli-Ayup-English-1.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2021.

survived a Chinese concentration camp, so I can survive this."[16] For some observers, the privileged silence and choice to look away outside the Tribunal chamber hall is as disconcerting as the physical violence heard inside. Physical death is not necessarily worse than social death, the "intolerable harms" of community trauma, language loss, disconnection, and the deprivation of people's ability to socially reproduce (Card 2010: 97, 284). Ethnographers must engage with how Uyghurs at the tribunal communicated the intolerable harm to self and human connections caused by mass physical violence, not their inability to endure suffering or survive through that violence.

The ongoing uncertainty and indefiniteness of family disconnection, not knowing if loved ones are being tortured, is described by members of the Uyghur and Kazakh diaspora as torture itself. Yi Xiaocuo, a diaspora artist, established the online art platform, Camp Album, to support separated families, describing "not knowing" as "trauma."[17] This is why one witness said, "I wish there was an earthquake, then everyone would die, and I would live in peace." This narrative echoes the private words of many and their desires for the resolution and human connections which they are denied. One anonymous interviewee apologized for saying they wished everyone would just die. All they needed was to hear that I knew they were simply expressing rage at unresolved suffering, which they can do nothing about.

University ethics bureaucracy does not support researchers navigating these global multisensory fields of genocide because they have been constructed from experiences in liberal democracies and on a scientifically and emotionally untenable binary between participant and observer. Genocide does not affect researchers as observers, yet it deeply affects us as participants of an in-between kind, connected through relationships and love for people feeling genocide. Geoffrey Nice summarized these sessions by saying "truth-telling is for the brave" and "it is always wrong to look away." Privileged researchers need more courage, and less protection, to listen and be willing to be changed by listening to people's suffering, otherwise both intellectual understanding and genocide prevention become impossible.

The party-state's anxious and racialized response described genocide as "entirely foreign to Chinese" but "familiar to Anglo-Saxons with a long legacy of genocide" (Liu, Fan, and Xie 2021). This binary, civilizationist worldview would be unfamiliar to Genghis Khan and the Qianlong Emperor, architects of state-building genocides in present-day China. The party-state's racialized framing of global politics and human ethics appeals to the ethnocentrism and egocentrism of both Han nationalism and "white guilt," which frame the world solely in terms of their own identities as colonized or colonizer, with no space for Turkic-speaking, Central Asian Uyghurs, in between "East" and "West." Binary East/West framings are often comfortable for Eurocentric critical scholars in North America and Europe, accustomed to reducing power in global politics to US foreign policy. Critical scholars now must reflect on their silence and roles in genocide. Drawing civilizational boundaries between Anglo-Saxon West and Chinese East, or reducing Uyghur suffering to matters of "pro-" or "anti-China" sentiment, invisibilizes Uyghurs and all other peoples who experience colonialism and state violence.

Genocide is a tragic but very human endeavor. People often choose to inflict epistemic and physical violence on others, silencing alternative perspectives, to secure their identity and to feel good about themselves. Uyghurs' Central Asian identities and their experiences of genocide shatter Sinocentric and Eurocentric images of the world divided into East and West or good and evil. Ontological security is impossible because the world and our place in it is always changing, yet its unchallenged desires are why concentration camps and silence persist in this day and age . . .

16. See Uyghur Tribunal 2021, "Gulbahar Haitiwaji—Full Statement." https://uyghurtribunal.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/06-1400-JUN-21-UTFW-006-Gulbahar-Haitiwaji-English-1.pdf. Accessed December 21, 2021.

17. See Camp Album Project. https://camp-album.com. Accessed December 21, 2021.

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